



FOOTBALL REVIEW COMMITTEE INTERIM REPORT

GAA

WHERE WE
ALL BELONG

FRC
2024/2025

“Football when played with attacking intent is still a great sport to watch, e.g. Dublin v Derry ’24 League final. However, there is generally too many games dominated by too much slow possession-based football with 15 men inside the defensive ‘45 and [the] other team keeping possession around the middle. [It is] Made even worse by teams who drop off kickouts to immediately retreat into this shape. [A] Rule change [is] needed to draw teams out (possibly one to enforce 3/4 players having to stay up in attacking half)”.

“An end-to-end style game where the first instinct of the player in possession is to move the ball forward”.

“1 v 1 catching, 1 v 1 taking on the man, are such entertaining battles. The sooner the better for all of this to come in. I’m 21 years old and would love to be playing more exciting games. Games have become boring”.

“If you don’t abandon the advance mark, at least make it as was originally intended- from outside the 45m line to inside the 20m line”.

“Having 3 or 4 players from each team staying in opposition half would at least leave more space in attack and possibly encourage kicking of ball to forwards when countering”.

A dark blue silhouette of a football player in mid-kick, positioned centrally. The player is facing away from the viewer, with their right leg extended forward and their left leg planted. A solid dark blue circle representing the ball is to the right of the player's foot. The background is a dark teal color with a pattern of concentric, perspective-distorted lines radiating from the bottom left, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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FRC

2024/2025



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FRC COMMITTEE MEETINGS

35 (20 on-line/15 in-person)

PUBLIC SURVEY

>7.3k responses
(Opened 05/04 - Closed 30/06)



SURVEY COMMENTS, EMAILS, LETTERS ANALYSED

>5k reviewed and considered

DELPHI SURVEY WITH GAA COACHES

3 of 3 rounds completed



1-2-1 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Connacht Council
Leinster Council
Ulster Council
Munster Council
County Board Chairs
National Referee's Committee x2
Senior Referee's Group
GAA Games Development Office
GAA GDMs and GDAs
Cumann na mBunscol

GAA Medical, Scientific & Welfare Committee
GAA World Council
Gaelic Writers Association
Provincial & County Heads of Games
GAA Britain
GAA Higher Education Council
Inter County Managers x2
Gaelic Players Association x2

GOVERNANCE

Coiste Bainiste x1
Ard Chomhairle x3
Standing Committee on Playing Rules x3



FOCUS GROUPS

- Munster #1, Páirc Uí Chaoimh, 16/05/24
- Leinster #1, Portlaoise, 13/06/24
- Ulster #1, Monaghan, 12/06/24
- Leinster #2, Enfield 10/06/24
- Ulster #2, Toomebridge, 12/06/24
- Connacht, Began 10/06/24

SAND BOX GAMES

- SB#1** Mullingar
- SB#2** Began
- SB#3** Abbottstown
- SB#4** Abbottstown
- SB#5** Ennis
- SB#6** Inniskeen
- SB#7** Mullahoran



TEACHTAIREACHT ÓN UACHTARÁN

Is cúis áthais dom fáilte a chur roimh an foilseacháin seo agus creidim go bhfuil deis orga againn athruithe móra a dhéanamh don cluiche peile agus é a fheabhsú don todhchaí agus don glúnta atá chun teacht inár ndhiaidh.

It gives me great pleasure to pen these words and welcome the publication of the Report of the Football Review Committee after what has been an incredibly intense period of work for the group since their appointment last February.

In fact, it's hard to believe that they have covered the ground they have in that period of time and in doing so, they have remained loyal to the very ambitious timeline that was laid down by Committee Chairperson Jim Gavin.

Those of us who grew up immersed in the game of football do not need a reminder of the importance of the game as a vehicle for sport, leisure, and the

pursuit of excellence but also as a spectacle for positive engagement and entertainment.

For many of us, immersion in football is a way of life. It is the most played game of our codes, and it has travelled well across our global network.

Notwithstanding its continued popularity, the game has gone through a period of introspection in recent years owing to the emergence of new trends and tactics, some of them linked to advances in technology and others because of the creativity and ingenuity of those coaching our top teams, tasked as they are at finding new and innovative ways of pushing boundaries and exploring new ground.

All sporting codes evolve – some faster than others – to reflect the environment they operate in.

Indeed, the game of football as we know it is very different to that first codified in the early days of



Cumann Lúthchleas Gael and it has had a number of incarnations before settling where it is today.

The work of the committee is challenging us to examine whether we are happy with what we have or if we can make this great game better.

Their approach has been forensic and their workload daunting but the proposals before us have been based on empirical evidence involving not just some of the leading lights of the game but also factoring in feedback from those toiling at every level of the game.

Our organisation has shown in recent years and decades that it is not immune to change. It is not change for change's sake but rather because it is deemed appropriate and necessary.

This is another such occasion – an opportunity that is unlikely to present itself as clearly and forcefully again for some time.

I look forward to the debate that will accompany the release of this report, and I encourage everyone to participate in it, not least those who have had an active role in the discussion up to this point.

I would like to thank Jim Gavin and his committee members for their unstinting work over the last nine months. The integrity of their work is beyond reproach.

I would also like to acknowledge the back-up and support they have had from staff in Croke Park and from club and county players who have assisted in sandboxing exercises.

I sincerely hope that this report provokes the debate and process of contemplation that it deserves.

Football will be the better for it.

Le gach dea ghuí,

Jarlaith Ó Broin

Jarlaith Ó Broin
Uachtarán
Cumann Lúthchleas Gael



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is Ireland's largest sporting organisation with a total of 1,616 Clubs and 450 overseas promoting Gaelic games in their local communities.

The strategic plan 'Aontas 2026 – Towards One GAA for All'¹ features a variety of objectives to realise the GAA's vision as a sustainable community-based and volunteer-led Association where as many as possible, participate in Gaelic games and culture for as long as possible. A key focus area is to provide *"the best possible games experience for players and spectators"* with the vision description that *"Gaelic games will be the most enjoyable amateur sports in the world to play and watch"*.

CONTEXT

Against this backdrop Jarlath Burns, Uachtarán CLG / GAA President, established a Football Review Committee (FRC) in February 2024 with the aim of evaluating the current rules and regulations of Gaelic football, the most popular sport on the island.

The FRC, comprising of former players, managers, coaches, officers, a member of Central Council, and full-time staff of the Association were issued terms of reference including a remit to establish a new blueprint for Gaelic Football by identifying potential rules enhancements that respect and balance both the tradition of the game with modern innovations, to create a more exciting and dynamic playing and spectator experience.²

METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted through a bespoke on-line public survey, engagement with Provincial Councils, The GAA World Council, Provincial Council Britain GAA, Provincial Head of Games, County Board Chairpersons, County Heads of Games, The National Referees Development Committee, the Senior Intercounty Referees' Group, GAA Higher Education Council, Cumann na mBunscol, GAA Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee, The Gaelic Writers Association, Inter County Managers, the Gaelic Players Association and through consideration of ideas expressed in correspondence received by email or letter. In addition, workshops took place in each

province and separately a focused Delphi survey was conducted over several rounds with subject matter experts to stress test emerging ideas.

In advance of the on-line survey the FRC members individually completed an assessment of the rules of Gaelic football, on how they were applied and enforced including an assessment of potential rule enhancements. This foundation exercise formed the basis of the Committees initial discussions. Along with analysing current trends in Gaelic football the committee received quantitative data and briefs on the game over the last decade, considered games from the 1940's to the present day and how the rules have evolved since the first Gaelic football rules were adopted by the Association in 1885.

FRC members chaired workshops in the four provinces with local coaches and briefed and received input from provincial councils and county board chairpersons. Reports from previous Football Review Committees were analysed as was the work of the Standing Committee on Playing Rules and recent motions submitted by GAA Units for consideration by Congress 2025 were assessed with a view towards gauging the landscape of change and incorporating some of them into the new blueprint for Gaelic football which emerged from the FRC's deliberations and research.

RESULTS FROM RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Across all ages, provinces and grades the top five skills dominating the on-line survey, and letter/email correspondence received were: kicking, catching, scoring of long-range points, goal scoring and general creative play. The top three tactical skills were: 1 v 1 contests to gain possession of the ball, taking on an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation, and good support play during speedy attacking transitions. A consistency of similar themes emerged from the committee's engagement with all stakeholders.

The survey also highlighted the extent which people dislike dissent towards match officials and cynical/delaying tactics.

In general, people like the game of Gaelic Football, but there are specific things that they don't like.

1. <https://www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/administration/strategic-plan>

2. <https://www.gaa.ie/article/football-review-committee-202425>



There is an awareness and acceptance that the shape of the game has changed, however people want to see:

- A game where skill and risk taking are rewarded.
- A game which encourages forward momentum.
- A game of contests.

The FRC proposals are a synthesis of various ideas from the public on-line survey, workshops with the provincial coaches, the Delphi survey, multiple stakeholder engagement, player engagement through survey, post-game feedback following Sandbox test games and the many FRC members focus group meetings and workshops.

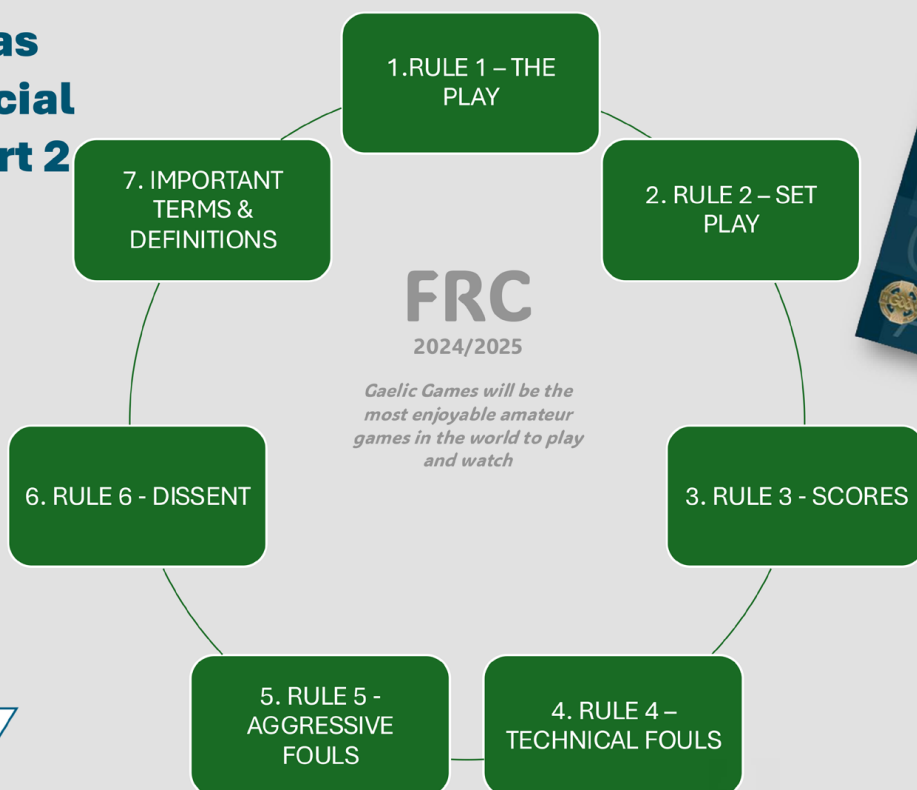
FRC PROPOSED RULE ENHANCEMENTS

The results are 7 Core Rule Enhancements and other interconnect proposals that speak to the FRC's terms of reference and the Associations vision to make Gaelic Games/ Gaelic football the most exciting amateur games in the world to play and watch.

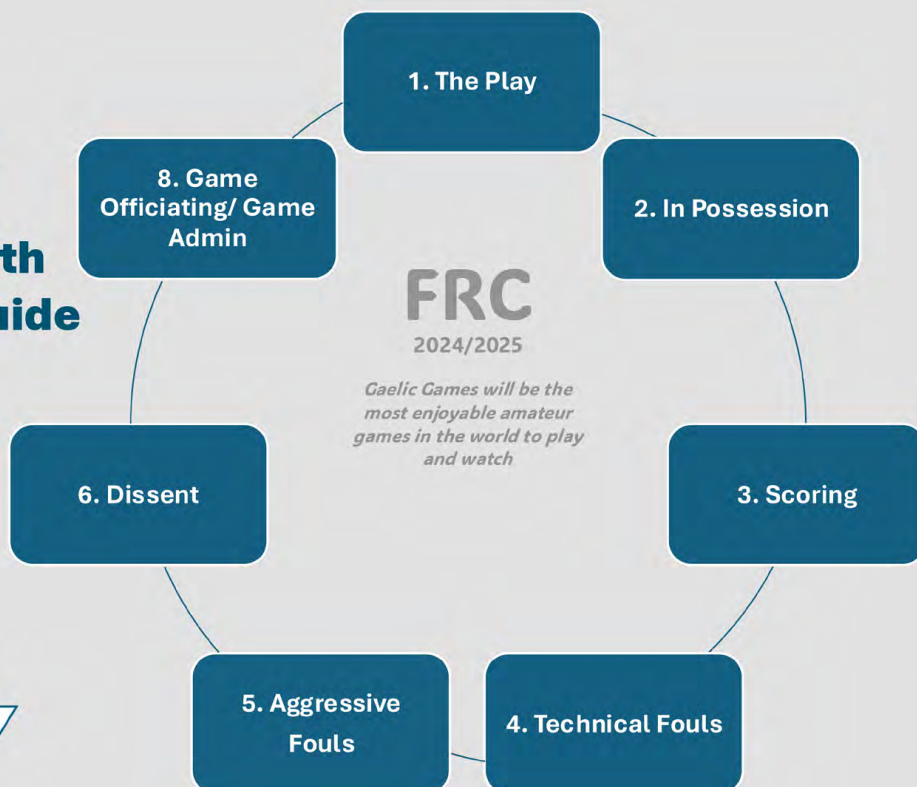
The 7 Core Rule Enhancements are interdependent and, in summary, are as follows:

1. To start the game and restart it after halftime, the referee will throw-in the ball between 2 players. The other 2 midfielders will take position on opposite sides of the field on the halfway line.
2. Kick out's must go beyond the 40m arc. Players must remain 13m from the ball but may stay inside the 20m line.
3. The goalkeeper may only receive a pass from a teammate if they are inside the opposition half, or if they and the player passing the ball are inside their large rectangle.
4. A player fouled may immediately take a solo and go (a toe-tap).
5. Each team must keep any 3 outfield players in each half of the field. Leaving 11 outfield players to defend in one's half of the field and 11 outfield players to attack (a dashed line, from side-line-to-side-line, will now mark midfield).
6. The current advance mark is gone. A new mark is introduced whereby a player may claim a mark if the ball is caught inside the 20m line after it is kick passed outside the 45m line. To reward the risk, the player may continue on until the advantage is no longer accrued, whereby the referee will give a free-kick from the place of the mark.
7. A new 40m arc will be introduced at each end an extend back to join at the 20m line. A point scored outside the arc is worth 2 points, a point inside the arc or inside the 20m line is worth 1 point and a goal will accrue 4 points.

Focus areas in the Official Guide - Part 2



Emerging Themes aligned with Official Guide Part II



Other interconnected rule proposals include:

- a. To disincentivise any tactical fouls which purposefully delay and impede play, the ball will be advanced 50m.
- b. To disincentivise dissent by players, the ball will be advanced 50m.
- c. To disincentivise dissent by team officials, a free will be conceded on the 13m line.
- d. Any dissent by a player at 18 or younger grades will warrant an automatic Sin Bin for 10mins (i.e. zero tolerance) and a 50m penalty – however in this instance, not to penalise their teammates, the player Black Carded can be replaced.
- e. The cynical behaviour of deliberately holding up a player will be considered a Black Card offence.
- f. A Stop Clock (Public Clock) will be introduced.
- g. Players contributing to a melee (i.e. the 3rd or subsequent player in) will receive a Black Card.
- h. Contact with the head of an opponent head will warrant a red card.
- i. Interfering with or any form of restraint to the neck or throat area of an opponent will warrant a red card.
- j. Referees may use vanishing foam to indicate the place for a free kick inside the 65m line.
- k. The 'square ball' rule from a free kick is now aligned with that from open play i.e. player may now enter the small rectangle once the free kick is taken.
- l. The referee may allow advantage to develop without time limit.
- m. The team captain, or a nominated deputy are the only player to speak to the referee to seek clarification of a decision made by the referee.

NEXT STEPS

The supreme authority within the GAA is An Comhdháil (Congress). This body, comprising of delegates representing counties and other units of the organisation, are the authority to enact, amend, or rescind rules in the GAA Official Guide. On the 30th November 2024 An Comhdháil Speisialta (Special Congress) will convene with the purpose to discuss and ratify FRC proposals.

Prior to this meeting, Ard Chomhairle (Central Council), the supreme governing body of the Association, will meet on the 26th October 2024 to review the FRC Interim Report/ Rule Proposals and ratify or otherwise for consideration by Special Congress.

Rule changes made at Special Congress will be adopted on a temporary basis for 2025 competitions.

Following conclusion of the 2025 Inter County competitions the FRC will present a Final Report with proposals that will again be discussed and considered for ratification to come into effect as a permanent rule change in 2026.

CONCLUSION

With its research and analysis complete, the FRC considered rule enhancement options with the aim of maintaining a balance between tradition and modern tactical innovations in Gaelic Football with a view to making the game exciting and dynamic to play and increase the overall entertainment value for spectators.

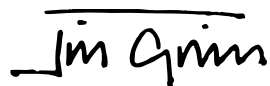
Our experience, and the teams who took part in Sandbox Games, is that the FRC rule enhancement proposal's meet the Associations aim. To quote a recent inter county manager who observed a game played in Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan (28th September 2024) under the FRC rule enhancement proposals:

"The biggest compliment I can pay is that the game is very natural and flowed really well"

MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

The FRC expresses its sincere thanks to those who contributed to the on-line survey, the Delphi Survey and/or took part in the many workshops, stakeholder engagements and Sandbox test games.

Ní neart go cur le chéile - There's no strength without unity.



Séamus Ó Gáibhín / Jim Gavin
Cathaoirleach/Chairperson
Choiste Athbhreithnithe na Peile/
Football Review Committee



CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVOLUTION OF GAELIC FOOTBALL RULES

Credit: Dr Paul Rouse and GAA History Committee

Eve of founding of GAA: Maurice Davin wrote in *United Ireland* newspaper on 13 October 1884 of localised football games:

“I may say there are no rules and therefore the games are often dangerous.”

Who wrote the first rules of ‘Gaelic’ football and what were they?

When the second meeting of the GAA was held in the Victoria Hotel in Cork on Saturday, 27 December 1884, Maurice Davin, as the Association’s new President, was asked to head a committee, which included the secretaries of the GAA (Michael Cusack, John McKay and John Wyse Power), to draft the GAA’s rules for athletics, hurling and Gaelic football. As it turned out, Davin went about drafting the rules largely on his own. It was a job he was well-placed to do. A detailed notebook which he kept during the 1870s and 1880s contains notes and newspaper cuttings on the rules and organisation of English athletics, as well as notes on the rules and terminology for soccer. At the third GAA meeting – held in Thurles on 17 January 1885 – Davin presented a set of rules which were unanimously adopted.

1885

First Football Rules, 17 January 1885:

1. Teams up to 21 players aside. All players from both teams line up in midfield for the throw-in.
2. Pitch at least 120 yards long by 80 in breadth and properly marked by boundary lines.
3. Soccer-shaped goalposts, 8ft high and 15ft wide. Only goals can be scored.
4. Pushing, tripping, holding and headbutting not allowed.
5. When the ball is kicked over the sideline it shall be thrown back by a player of the opposite side to him who kicked it over.

Michael Cusack: *“We have to remind those who play football that it is not to be passed or carried in any way. It may be caught, but it must be kicked or put on the ground at once. It may also be hit with the hand. The passing and carrying is entirely foreign, having been imported from rugby.”* Letter to *The United Irishman*

The first football match under the new rules was played in Callan on 15th February 1885 between Callan and Kilkenny teams. The result was a scoreless draw and about four thousand spectators attended.

1886

Due to the number of matches finishing scoreless, points posts are added, which measured 21ft to each side of the soccer-shaped goalposts, which are also widened to 21ft. The distance from outside post to outside post is 63ft. These point posts were copied from the Australian Rules game.

Points were introduced but only count if the teams finish level on goals.

The rule which allowed players to break off and wrestle each other while the play continued is abolished.

After a wide (or score) play is restarted by a kickout, opponents have to be at least 25 yards from the kicker (goalkeeper).

Referee may send a player off for all, or part of a game (sin bin idea) and may allow a substitute but only for a player injured by an opponent.

Team jerseys to be of different colours.

Maurice Davin



1888

Substitutions allowed for injured players.

Recommended that referees use a whistle.

When a defending player played the ball over his own goal line (outside the goal posts) or over his own crossbar a ‘free in’ was awarded from 40 yards (from 20 yards in 1885).

The first time a field was clearly marked out with flags spaced at 20 yard intervals was on Easter Monday 26th April 1886 in Athlone when Athenry played Clara.



Michael Cusack



Early style goalposts



1892

The value of a goal is set at 5 points, previously a goal had been worth more than any number of points.

Number of players reduced from 21 to 17.



1895

21 yard and 50 yard line introduced.

Playing the ball over own end line was penalised by a 50 yard kick.

Modern linesmen and goal umpires introduced.

The ball can only be caught before it bounces after being kicked or fisted on.

No throwing of the ball.

No hopping of the ball and no carrying for longer than 4 steps, by which time it must be struck with the hand or kicked.

All free kicks awarded by referees to be kicked off the ground.

Ball reduced from Size 6 to Size 5.

A 7-yard square introduced in front of the goals from which all kickouts must be taken. Giving rise to the term "square ball".

1896

Goals reduced in value from five to three points.



1901

GAA establishes sub-committee to exam the playing rules.

A 7-yard square replaced by a 10-yard line from which all kickouts must be taken.

Width of soccer-style goals reduced from 21ft to 18ft and width out to sideposts also reduced from 21ft to 18ft.

1907-9

The ball may be caught whether it has bounced or not.

The ball may not be picked off the ground.

14, 21, and 50 yard lines, as well as a midfield line, marked on pitches.

A parallelogram measuring 15 yards by 5 yards in front of the goals for kickouts to be taken and in which no attacking player can stand before the ball arrives to protect goalkeepers.

Players allowed one hop with the ball.

Players allowed bounce the ball going forward in basketball style, provided they haven't caught it first.



1910

Modern H-shaped goalposts introduced.

For throw-in to start each half, all midfielders and forwards from each team line up opposite each other in the middle of the field.

Players taking the Kick-Out can touch the ball more than once (the practice was to flick it up to yourself before pulling on it).

1913

Teams reduced from 17 to 15 players a side.

1923

If a player is tackled after he kicks the ball, the free will be given from where the ball lands.

A penalty kick is introduced.

1926

Running while tipping the ball in the air on your hand is banned.

1945

Instead of one-handed throw-in, sideline kicks now to be taken from the ground.

A booklet produced for referees insists that the ball must be “toed into the hand” and not picked off the ground.

Referees encouraged not to blow for every “petty infringement” but to let the game flow.

1950

Handpasses can only be given using a closed fist.

1955

Three substitutions allowed per team.

1965

Throw-in to begin each half now restricted to both midfielders from each team.

A fair charge defined as having to be shoulder-to-shoulder.

1970

Players allowed to take a quick free without waiting for the referee’s whistle.

Senior championship matches now extended to last 80 minutes.

1974

The elimination of the third man tackle. “Charging a player unless he has possession or is about to play the ball shall be a foul”.

Large parallelogram introduced as a penalty area. It’s an offence to charge the goalkeeper within the small(er) rectangle and an offence for an attacking player to be within the small(er) rectangle before the ball enters it during play.

1975

Open-handed handpass allowed.

Return to 70-minute championship matches.

Ball brought forward ten yards for dissent to referee.

Players to be booked after two personal fouls and then sent off after a third.

1980

Pitch markings now changed to metres from yards.

1981

All handpassed scores disallowed.

1990

Free kicks can be taken from the hand or off the ground.

All sideline kicks now to be taken from the hand.

Footballers allowed fist a point but not a goal.

1995

Pitch markings changed to include exclusion zone outside 20m line.

2000

Number of substitutions allowed increased to 5 per team.

2007

Temporary blood subs introduced.

2012

Player allowed be in small rectangle before the ball arrives, except from free kicks, line balls and 45s.



2014

Introduction of a Black Card for Cynical Behaviour Fouls, which are:

1. Deliberately pull down an opponent.
2. Deliberately trip an opponent with the hand(s), arm, leg or foot.
3. Deliberately body collide with an opponent after he has played the ball away or for the purpose of taking him out of a movement of play.
4. Threaten or to use abusive or provocative language or gestures to an opponent or a teammate.
5. Remonstrate in an aggressive manner with a Match Official.

Substitutes: Change in the number of substitutes allowed: Increased to SIX per team.

2017

Introduction of the Mark, when a player catches the ball cleanly from a Kick-Out without it touching the ground, on or past the 45m line nearest the Kick-Out point. The player awarded a ‘Mark’ shall have the options of (a) Taking a free kick or (b) Playing on immediately.

2020

Advanced Mark: Players who take a ‘Mark’ or clean possession inside the opposition’s 45 will be rewarded with a free kick. Players can choose to play on or signal to the referee that they wish to take the free instead. This can be brought back to the 13m line for balls caught between there and the end line.

Sin Bin: If a player gets a black card, they will spend 10 minutes off the field. No substitute allowed, reducing his side’s numbers for that period. A second black card, or a black following a yellow, will result in a red card. The player will be sent off for the rest of the match.

All kick-outs must now be taken from the 20-metre line rather than the current Mark of the 13m line. The ball must travel forward, and all players must be at least 13m away and outside the D and 20m line when the kick is taken.

2021

Concussion substitute permitted.



SANDBOX GAMES



Sandbox #1 Mullingar 15.06.24



Sandbox #2 Began 22.06.24



Sandbox #3 Abbottstown 29.06.24



Sandbox #4 Abbottstown 13.07.24



Sandbox #4 Abbottstown 13.07.24





FRC TERMS OF REFERENCE

TEARMAÍ TAGARTHA

REVIEW OF GAELIC FOOTBALL 2024/2025

RATIONALE

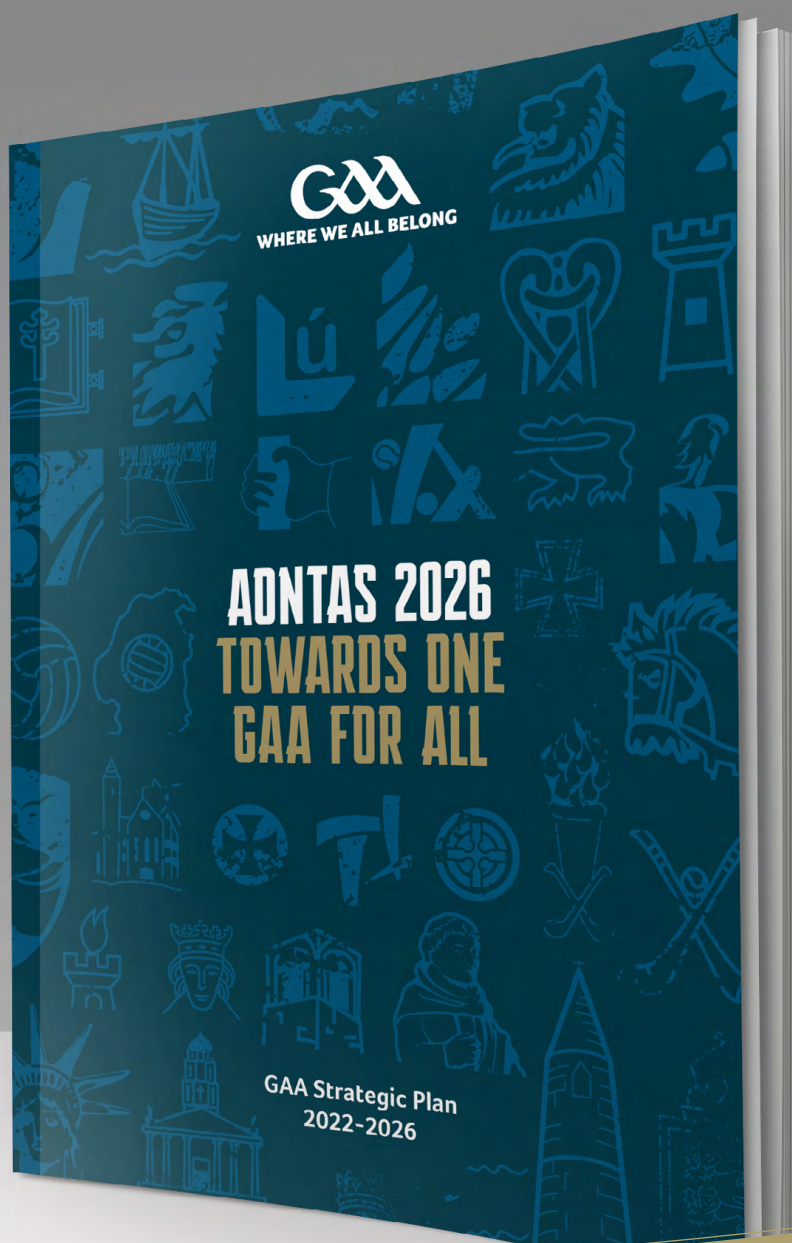
This Football Review emanates from the *Strategic Plan Aontas 2026* in its vision statement: ‘to be a sustainable community-based and volunteer-led association where as many as possible, participate in Gaelic Games and culture, for as long as possible’.

THE KEY FOCUS AREA – GAMES:

‘Providing the best possible games experience for players and spectators’

THE VISION DESCRIPTION:

‘Gaelic Games will be the most enjoyable amateur games in the world to play and watch’





TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.** Evaluate the current rules and regulations of Gaelic Football, including their application and enforcement, to identify potential areas for modification or enhancement that could contribute to a more exciting and dynamic viewing experience.
- 2.** Examine the pacing and flow of Gaelic Football matches, considering options to maintain a balance between tradition and introducing innovations that could increase the overall entertainment value for spectators.
- 3.** Examine the previous reviews of Gaelic Football which have been undertaken by the association as well as the work of the Standing Committee on Playing Rules.
- 4.** Explore possibilities for adjusting scoring systems or introducing new elements that could encourage more strategic and engaging gameplay, aiming to captivate the audience and create memorable moments.





5. Engage with players, coaches, referees, officials, and fans to gather diverse perspectives on the current state of Gaelic Football and to identify potential changes that align with both the spirit of the game and the desire for a more entertaining spectator experience.
6. Examine the Motions which have been submitted for Congress 2025 with a view towards gauging the landscape of change and incorporating some of them into the new blueprint for Gaelic football which will emerge from the group's deliberations and research.
7. Consider a coaching and games template which may be required depending on the proposals emanating from the review process.
8. Present an interim report for consideration by Ard Chomhairle with a view for full discussion and ratification in 2025.





STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDERS

STAKEHOLDER GROUP A

Below the Horizon

Defined as organisational and administrative structures that the Association is founded on, with the Club being the bedrock.

*Uachtarán
Coiste Bainistí
Ard Chomhairle
Provincial Councils
County Boards
Clubs - Ireland & Overseas*

*Others:
CCCC
Senior Croke Park Staff
Medical, Science & Welfare
Committee
GAA Games Development Office
Comhairle Árdoideachais
Cumann na mBunscol*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP B

On the Horizon

Defined as those who partake directly in the game of Gaelic Football.

*Players - Club
Players - Intercounty
Players - Cumann Na mBunscol
Club Players Association
Gaelic Players Association
Club Referees
Senior Referees Group
Managers - Club
Manager - Inter-County
Provincial Coaches
GDMs/GDAs/GPOs*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP C

Above the Horizon

Defined as those who support, report or who have general interest in the game of Gaelic Football.

*Fans/ Supporters
Gaelic Writers Association
The Media/ Journalists/ Podcasts
Official Partners/ Sponsors*



COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

COLM COLLINS – Cratloe GAA – Clare

A native of Kilmihil in Co. Clare. Attended St. Flannan's College secondary school and completed a B.Ed. in Mary Immaculate College. Played and managed at all levels in Kilmihil. Involved in coaching since the age of 19. Played for Clare club in New York. Got involved with the development squads. Coached U14s, U15s, U16s and U17s. Managed minors and U21s. Appointed Clare Senior football manager in 2014 and did that job for 10 years. Currently manager of his adopted club Cratloe's senior football team and has been in that job for the last 15 years. Also involved in underage coaching in the club.



PATRICK DOHERTY – The Downs GAA – Westmeath

Patrick Doherty played hurling and football in Westmeath for his clubs, Delvin and The Downs, and represented the county in underage grades in both codes. He was a member of the Coláiste Mhuire, Mullingar team which won the Leinster Colleges' senior football championship in 1983, and won a Freshers' Football title and Trench Cup medal with Sligo R.T.C. He was PRO of the Westmeath County Board for seven years.

He is a Chartered Accountant and worked in practice and industry up to 2008, before a change in career when he became GAA National Match Officials Manager and is currently Head of Operations for Westmeath GAA, a position he was appointed to in 2019. He completed an MSc in Sport Management in UCD in 2020.



ÉAMONN FITZMAURICE – Finuge GAA – Kerry

Éamonn Fitzmaurice is from Kerry, is married to Tina and has two children Faye and Rian. He is a secondary school principal in Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne in Dingle. He played club football with Finuge and hurling with Lixnaw. He represented Kerry at all levels winning All-Irelands at minor, U21 and senior level. He managed Kerry to All-Ireland success, having also served as a selector. He is currently coaching Fossa and various school teams. He is a football analyst with *The Irish Examiner* and *RTÉ*.



SHANE FLANAGAN – Johnstownbridge GAA – Kildare

Shane Flanagan is the GAA's Director of Coaching and Games Development with responsibility for leading the strategic direction of games development at all levels of the Association. He joined the GAA in 2004 as Policy and Planning Officer, having worked at Meteor Mobile Communications as Site Acquisition and Property Officer. After this he was Provincial Games Manager and Operations Manager for Leinster Council GAA between 2006-2020. He has served on numerous central committees. A native of Johnstownbridge in Co. Kildare where he played for over 20 years that also included Trench Cup with Mary Immaculate Limerick, Sigerson with Maynooth University and U21 with Kildare. He has coached at underage and senior level with his club.



JIM GAVIN (CHAIRPERSON) – Round Towers GAA, Clondalkin – Dublin

A member of Round Towers GAA Club, Clondalkin, Dublin, Jim learnt to play Gaelic games in the local street leagues (coached by his father Jimmy) representing The 9th Lock, in Clonburris National Primary School and in Moyle Park College. He represented his club in hurling and football at all grades. Played Minor, U21 and Senior inter-county football with Dublin and later coached and managed Dublin U21 and senior football teams. Currently coaches Ballyboden St Enda's U16 Football and Hurling teams.



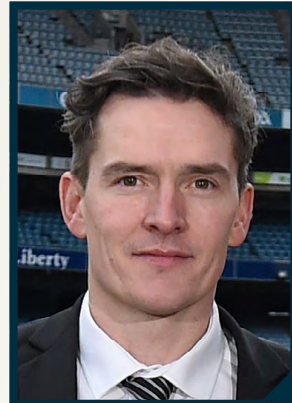
JAMES HORAN – Ballintubber GAA – Mayo

James Horan is a former Mayo senior player and manager who has had a successful eight-year tenure leading the Mayo senior team to six Connacht titles. He holds a Masters in Management Coaching, a Bachelor of Science, and a Diploma in Professional Management. With experience coaching teams such as Ballintubber, Westport, and Turloughmore, Horan has displayed his versatile coaching abilities across both football and hurling. A double All-Star, he has also contributed to the Mayo U20 team and mentors' various high-performance teams and athletes. Horan's on-field and off-field achievements underline his expertise and dedication to sports.



SÉAMUS KENNY (RUNAÍ) – Simonstown Gaels GFC – Meath

Séamus is a member of the Simonstown Gaels club in Navan and a former Senior Inter County footballer with Meath for 14 years. He has coached at various level in his Club from underage to adult. Séamus is the National Participation and Programmes Manager for the GAA and has served on various National Committees for the Association.



MICHAEL MEANEY – Old Leighlin GAA – Carlow

Michael is a member of Old Leighlin GAA in Carlow, having served in a variety of roles within the club, including Club Secretary to Club Chairperson. Representing Carlow as their delegate on Central Council, and a former member of the GAA Management Committee, Michael has also served as Carlow GAA Chairperson, and Treasurer. Outside of his endeavours with the GAA, Michael has over 40 years' experience in construction related industries and is Company Director of Stoneworld Limited and Eco Window Concepts Limited. Additionally, Michael has also served as a Director and Chair of Leighlinbridge Housing Association, which is a Voluntary Approved Housing Body.



ALEC McQUILLAN – Con Magees Glenravel GAC - Antrim

Alec McQuillan is a member of Con Magees Glenravel GAC in Co. Antrim. He played senior county football for Antrim from 1979 to 1990 and continued playing for the club until 2010. He has been involved in coaching and managing teams at youth and adult level. He was a member of the Antrim County Board from 2015 to 2018, as a delegate to Ulster Council, and he is currently a member of the Ulster GAA Hearings Committee. In the context of the Playing Rules, he was a member of the Standing Committee on the Playing Rules from 2018 - 2023.



MICHAEL MURPHY – Glenswilly GAA - Donegal

Michael is a member of the Glenswilly GAA club and former Senior Inter-county Gaelic Footballer with Donegal for 16 seasons 2007-2022. Was part of the Donegal teams that achieved 2012 All-Ireland success and five Ulster Senior Football Championships. Captained Ireland in the Compromise Rules series in 2013 and 2014. Studied a BSc. in Physical Education with Biology in DCU and a MSc. in Sport and Exercise Psychology in UUJ. Currently works as Head of Sport at Atlantic Technological University Donegal.



COLM NALLY – Newtown Blues GAA - Louth

Colm, an employee of the Department of Foreign Affairs, is a seasoned coach with over 20 years' experience coaching both club and county. He has spent many years coaching juvenile and adult teams with his local club Newtown Blues in Drogheda. He started his football career playing with O'Dwyers in Balbriggan, then moved to Drogheda where he played for Newtown Blues winning three senior county championships and two of which he captained. He has represented both Dublin and Louth at county level. He coached the Louth senior footballers for two years, Meath senior footballers for four years. Colm is a Master Tutor for the GAA and Sport Ireland. He is currently a coach with the Kildare senior footballers.



MALACHY O'ROURKE – Errigal Ciaran, Tyrone - Fermanagh

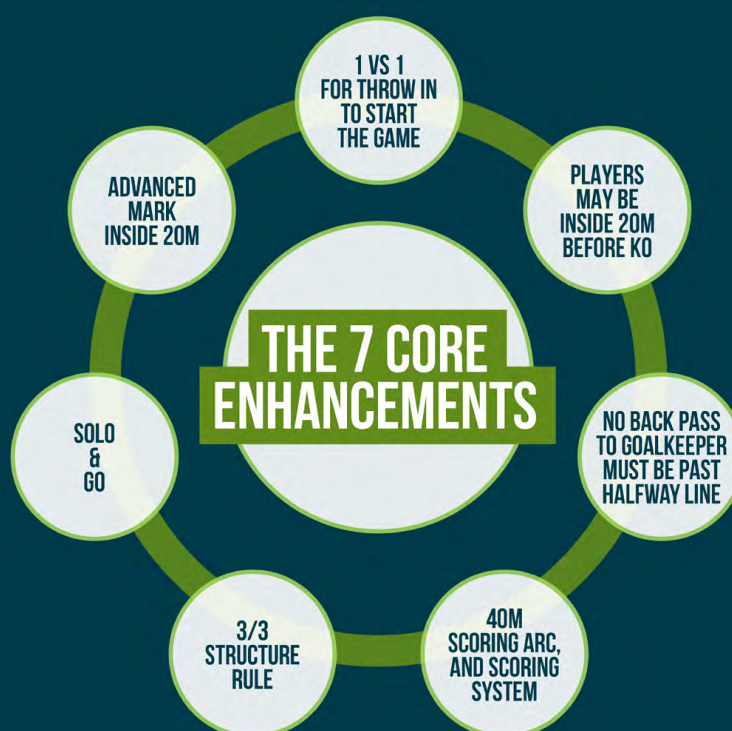
Malachy O'Rourke was Head of PE in St Joseph's College, Enniskillen. He played with his native Derrylin O'Connell's, winning two Intermediate Championships; won a Sigerson Cup with St Mary's University College, Belfast; and two Championships with Errigal Ciaran. He played Intercounty football with Fermanagh for 15 years. He managed Fermanagh for three years, leading them to their first Ulster Final in 26 years. He then managed Monaghan for seven years, taking them from Division 3 to Division 1 and winning two Ulster titles in 2013 and 2015. At club level, he has won six senior county titles across Tyrone, Cavan and Derry; alongside three Ulster Club titles with Loup (2003) and Watty Graham's, Glen (2022 & 2023) and an All-Ireland Club title with Glen in January 2024.





FRC – PROPOSED RULE ENHANCEMENTS

**FOOTBALL
REVIEW
COMMITTEE**



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

1. 1V1 FOR THROW-INS COMMENCING PLAY

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Fouling consistently occurs at the commencement of each half during 2 v 2 throw ins. Fouling happens either before or as the ball is thrown in, or as one of the midfield players gains possession.

The 1 v 1 throw in will make for an improved spectacle, as the player gaining possession will have the opportunity to immediately attack.

The other two midfielders are positioned on opposite sidelines adjacent to the 2 players contesting the throw-in and enter the field on play as the ball is thrown in.

1. 1V1 FOR THROW-INS COMMENCING PLAY

Expanded notes:

- The throw in shall be contested by one player from each team.
- The players must be positioned opposite the Referee and on their defensive side of the half-way line. If a player crosses the half-way line, before the ball is thrown in, a free kick shall be awarded from where the foul occurred.
- The second midfielder from each team shall be positioned on opposite sidelines, position themselves standing in the centre of the sideline and face the players contesting the throw-in. Teams will swap sidelines for the start of the 2nd half.
- All other players may only cross the 45m line, or the sideline after the Referee releases the ball for the throw-in.

THE PLAY

1(a) Throw-ins: One v One for throw-ins commencing play.**Principle Concept**

Fouling consistently occurs at the commencement of each half during 2 v 2 throw-ins. Fouling happens either before or as the ball is thrown in, or as one of the midfield players gains possession.

The 1 v 1 throw-in will make for an improved spectacle, as the player gaining possession will have the opportunity to immediately attack. The other two midfielders are positioned on opposite sidelines adjacent to the 2 players contesting the throw-in and enter the field of play as the ball is thrown in.

Expanded notes:

- The throw-in shall be contested by one player from each team.
- The players must be positioned opposite the Referee and on their defensive side of the half-way line. If a player crosses the half-way line, before the ball is thrown in, a free kick shall be awarded from where the foul occurred.
- The second midfielder from each team shall be positioned on opposite sidelines, position themselves standing in the centre of the sideline and face the players contesting the throw-in.
- Teams will swap sidelines for the start of the 2nd half.
- All other players may only cross the 45m line, or the sideline after the Referee releases the ball for the throw-in.

Motion (2)

That Rule 2.1 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 42) be amended to read as follows:

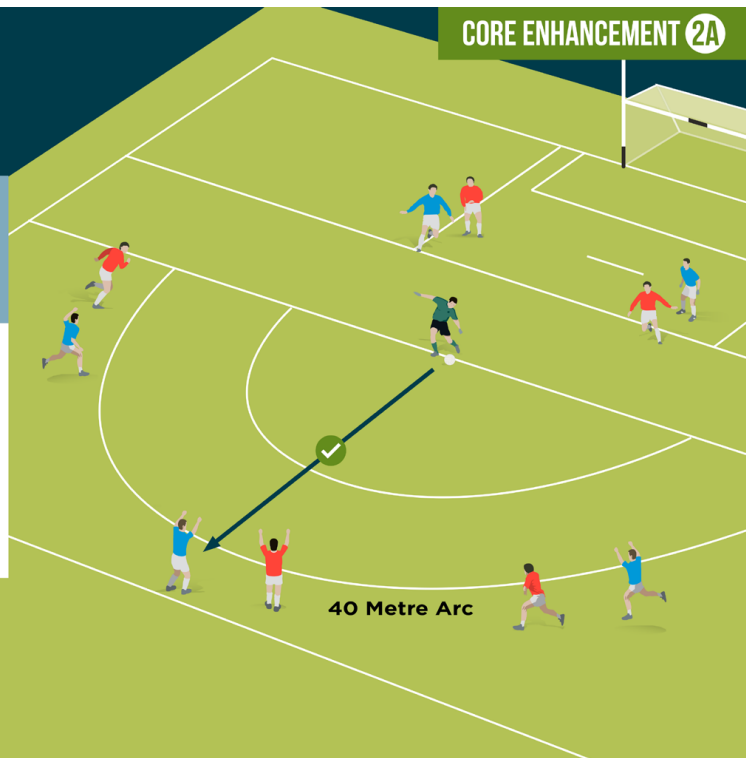
The Referee, facing the players, starts the game and restarts it after half-time, by throwing the ball between one player from each team, in their own defensive sides of the half-way line. **A second player from each team shall stand on opposite sidelines at the half-way line. The second players shall swap sidelines for the 2nd half throw-in. All other players shall be in their respective positions behind the 45m lines.**

2A. KICK-OUTS: KICKOUT ALLOWED TO BE TAKEN BEFORE ALL PLAYERS ARE OUTSIDE THE 20M LINE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The resumption of play after a score or wide is often delayed as players return to position outside the 20m line. Allowing players to remain inside the 20m line during a kickout will speed up the game, possibly allowing an attack to quickly develop by the team in possession before the defending team get into position.

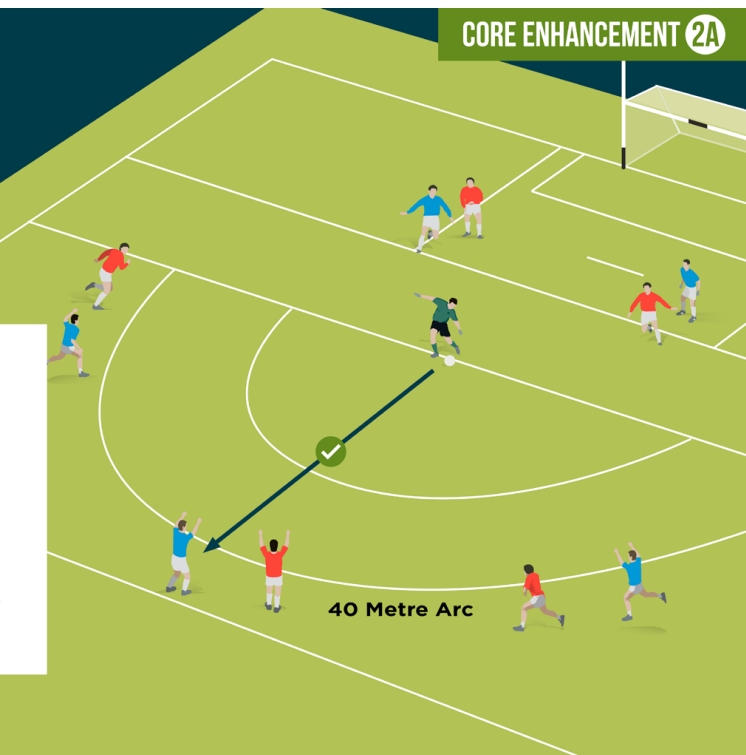
It will also allow for some innovation, where defending teams may position a player(s) behind the goalkeeper kicking the ball, in the off chance that they win the kickout and pass the ball immediately to that player(s).



2A. KICK-OUTS: KICKOUT ALLOWED TO BE TAKEN BEFORE ALL PLAYERS ARE OUTSIDE THE 20M LINE

Expanded notes:

- Expanded notes: Players may remain inside the 20m line before the kickout is taken.
- Players must not infringe the goalkeeper, or another opposition player, taking the kickout. Penalty - Free kick awarded at the halfway line.
- If the goalkeeper is not taking the kick-out, the goalkeeper shall stay in the small rectangle.
- The ball shall travel beyond the 20m line and outside the 40m arc before being played by another player on the attacking team.
- Players may remain inside the 40m arc but must not be closer than 13m from the ball.
- A player in direct receipt of a kick-out may not pass the ball to their team's goalkeeper, or another player taking the kickout, without another player playing the ball.



1 (b) Kick-outs: Kick-out allowed to be taken before all players are outside the 20m line.

Principle Concept

The resumption of play after a score or wide is often delayed as players return to position outside the 20m line. Allowing players to remain inside the 20m line during a kick-out will speed up the game, possibly allowing an attack to quickly develop by the team in possession before the defending team get into position.

It will also allow for some innovation, where defending teams may position a player(s) behind the goalkeeper kicking the ball, in the off chance that they win the kick-out and pass the ball immediately to that player(s).

Expanded notes:

- Players may remain inside the 20m line before the kickout is taken.
- All players must be 13m from the ball.
- Players must not infringe the goalkeeper, or another opposition player, taking the kickout. Penalty – Free kick awarded at the half-way line.

Motion (3)

That Rule 2.7(a) - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 43) be amended to read as follows:

When the ball is played over the endline by the Team attacking that end, or after a score is made, play is restarted by a kick-out off the ground from the centre point of the 20m line and shall be kicked forward.

If the goalkeeper is not taking the kick-out, the goalkeeper shall stay in the small rectangle, All other players shall be at least 13m from the ball until it is kicked. The player taking a kick-out may kick the ball more than once before any other player touches it but may not take the ball into the hands. The ball shall travel not less than 13m and outside the 40m arc before being played by another player of the defending team.

Players may remain inside the 20m line. Players may not impede or interfere with the goalkeeper, or another opposition player, taking the kickout.

Players may remain inside the 40m arc but must not be closer than 13m to the ball when it is being kicked.

Motion (4)

That Rule 2.7(c) - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 43) be amended to read as follows:

A player in direct receipt of a kick-out may not pass the ball to their team's goalkeeper, **or another player taking the kickout**, without another player playing the ball.

Motion (19)

That Rule 4.14 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 47) be deleted.

2B. KICK-OUTS: THE BALL MUST TRAVEL BEYOND THE 40M ARC

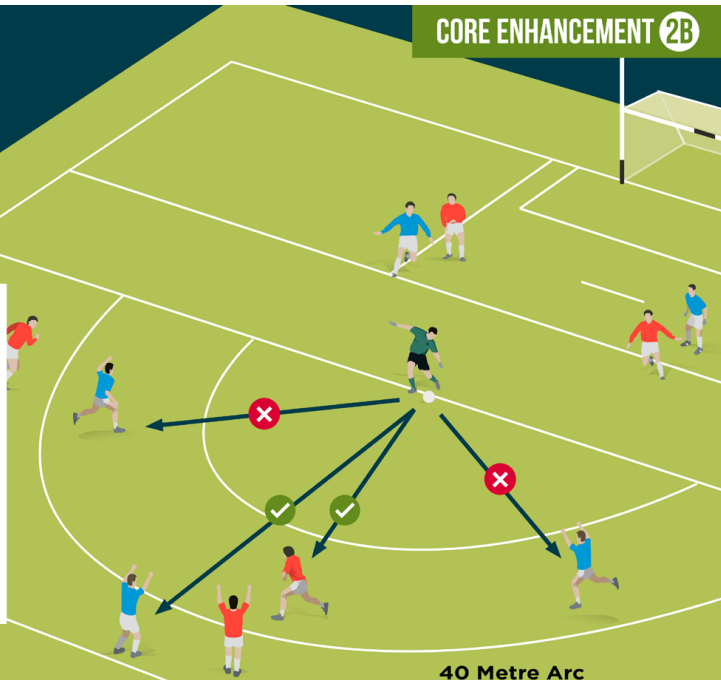
PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

With the introduction of the 40m arc for scoring all kickouts will have to travel past the 40m arc.

This requires a slightly longer kickout from the midpoint of the 20m line (20m to the apex of the arc, and 34m to where the arc intersects the 20m line). It will also create more 1 to 1 contests, as the arc is larger than previous, thus taking up more space on the pitch.

Similar to the current kick-out rule for the 13m semi-circle arc, the ball can only be played once it travels outside the new 40m arc i.e. players will need to be outside the 40m arc to receive the ball from a kickout.

However, to speed up the kickout, players from both teams may be inside the 40m but must be 13m from the ball. If they play the ball inside the arc from a kickout, a free kick is awarded to the opposition.

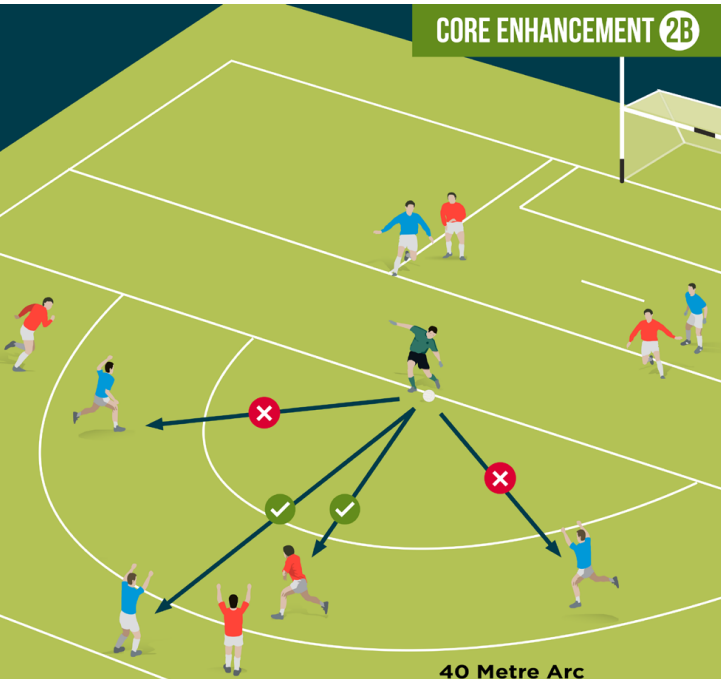


40 Metre Arc

2B. KICK-OUTS: THE BALL MUST TRAVEL BEYOND THE 40M ARC

Expanded notes:

- If the player on the team taking the kick out plays the ball inside the 40m arc, free kick to the opposition from the place of the foul. Opposition players must remain 13m from the ball and can play the ball inside the 40m arc.
- Players may remain inside the 40m arc but must not be closer than 13m from the ball.
- Penalty for interfering with or gaining possession of the ball inside the 40m arc - Free kick to be awarded 50m more advantageous than the position of the original kick-out.
- Players on the opposition may intercept/play the ball inside the 40m arc from an opposition kick-out without penalty.



40 Metre Arc

1(c) Kick-outs: The ball must travel beyond the 40m arc.**Principle Concept**

With the introduction of the 40m arc for scoring all kick-outs will have to travel past the 40m arc. This requires a slightly longer kick-out from the midpoint of the 20m line (20m to the apex of the arc, and 34m to where the arc intersects the 20m line). It will also create more 1 to 1 contests, as the arc is larger than previous, thus taking up more space on the pitch.

Similar to the current kick-out rule for the 13m semi-circle arc, the ball can only be played once it travels outside the new 40m arc i.e. players will need to be outside the 40m arc to receive the ball from a kick-out.

However, to speed up the kick-out, players from both teams may be inside the 40m but must be 13m from the ball. If they play the ball inside the arc from a kickout, a free kick is awarded to the opposition. If a player on the team taking the kick-out plays the ball inside the 40m arc, a free kick is awarded to the opposition. Players on the opposition may intercept/play the ball inside the 40m arc from an opposition kick-out without penalty.

Motion (5)

That Rule 4.20 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 48) be amended to read as follows:

For a player to be less than 13m from the ball, before a kick-out.

Penalty – a free kick from where the foul occurred

Motion (6)

That Rule 4.28 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 48) be deleted

Motion (7)

That Rule 4.29 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 48) be amended to read as follows:

For another player on the team taking a kick-out to play the ball before it has travelled outside the 40m arc.

Penalty – a free kick from where the foul occurred.

Motion (8)

That Rule 4.30 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 48) be deleted

Motion (9)

That the penalty for fouls described in Rules 4.27 – 4.32 - Rules of Foul Play - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 48 and 49) be amended to read as follows:

Penalty for the above fouls -

- (i) Cancel kick-out.
- (ii) Free kick on defenders' 13m line in front of scoring space.

Motion (10)

That Rule 4.33 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 49) be amended to read as follows:

A player in direct receipt of a kick-out may not pass the ball to their team's goalkeeper, or the player taking the kick-out, without another player playing the ball.

Penalty - A free kick from the 13m line opposite where the foul occurred.

3A. INSIDE THE HALFWAY LINE THE GOALKEEPER CAN ONLY RECEIVE THE BALL FROM A TEAMMATE INSIDE THE LARGE RECTANGLE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Frequently, teams in possession of the ball inside their own half of the pitch are recycling the ball back to their goalkeeper - sometimes when the player in possession is being tackled by the opposition and sometimes just to slow play down. This often causes the opposition forwards to retreat back inside their own half of the pitch.

When a defender gains possession in front of the goal (i.e. inside the large rectangle) he may use the goalkeeper as an outlet.

The goalkeeper may carry the ball outside the large rectangle without restriction.

The rule is also to encourage the team in possession to play in a forward direction and not use the goalkeeper as a pivot and an outlet to recycle possession.

3A. INSIDE THE HALFWAY LINE THE GOALKEEPER CAN ONLY RECEIVE THE BALL FROM A TEAMMATE INSIDE THE LARGE RECTANGLE

Expanded notes:

- The Goalkeeper can receive the ball inside the large rectangle, and the teammate passing the ball must be within the large rectangle. Otherwise, the goalkeeper must be beyond the halfway line to receive the ball from a team-mate.
- If the goalkeeper receives a pass inside the large rectangle, the goalkeeper may advance the ball outside the large rectangle without any restriction. Note: the goalkeeping rule on receiving a pass, including a return pass, beyond the midfield line still applies.
- If the goalkeeper intercepts the ball from an opposing player anywhere on the pitch, the goalkeeper may advance the ball without restriction. Note: the goalkeeping rule on receiving a pass, including a return pass, beyond the midfield line still applies.

1(d) Inside the halfway line the Goalkeeper can only receive the ball from a teammate inside the large rectangle.

Principle Concept

Frequently, teams in possession of the ball inside their own half of the pitch are recycling the ball back to their goalkeeper - sometimes when the player in possession is being tackled by the opposition and sometimes just to slow play down. This often causes the opposition forwards to retreat back inside their own half of the pitch.

When a defender gains possession in front of the goal (i.e. inside the large rectangle) he may use the goalkeeper as an outlet.

The goalkeeper may carry the ball outside the large rectangle without restriction.

The rule is also to encourage the team in possession to play in a forward direction and not use the goalkeeper as a pivot and an outlet to recycle possession.

Expanded notes:

- The Goalkeeper can receive the ball inside the large rectangle, and the teammate passing the ball must be within the large rectangle. Otherwise, the goalkeeper must be beyond the halfway line to receive the ball from a teammate.
- If the goalkeeper **receives a pass inside the large rectangle**, the goalkeeper may advance the ball outside the large rectangle without any restriction. Note: the goalkeeping rule on receiving a pass, including a return pass, beyond the midfield line still applies.
- If the goalkeeper **intercepts the ball from an opposing player** anywhere on the pitch, the goalkeeper may advance the ball without restriction. Note: the goalkeeping rule on receiving a pass, including a return pass, beyond the midfield line still applies.

Motion (11)

That the following be added as Rule 1.11 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - The Play - Official Guide Part 2 (page 41):

The Goalkeeper may only receive the ball from a teammate:

- (a) Inside the large rectangle when both the goalkeeper and the teammate passing the ball are inside the large rectangle; or
- (b) when the goalkeeper is in the opposition half of the field.

3B. THE GOALKEEPER CAN RECEIVE THE BALL FROM A TEAMMATE BEYOND THE HALFWAY LINE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The rule is to encourage the team in possession to play in a forward direction and not use the goalkeeper as a pivot and an outlet to recycle possession.

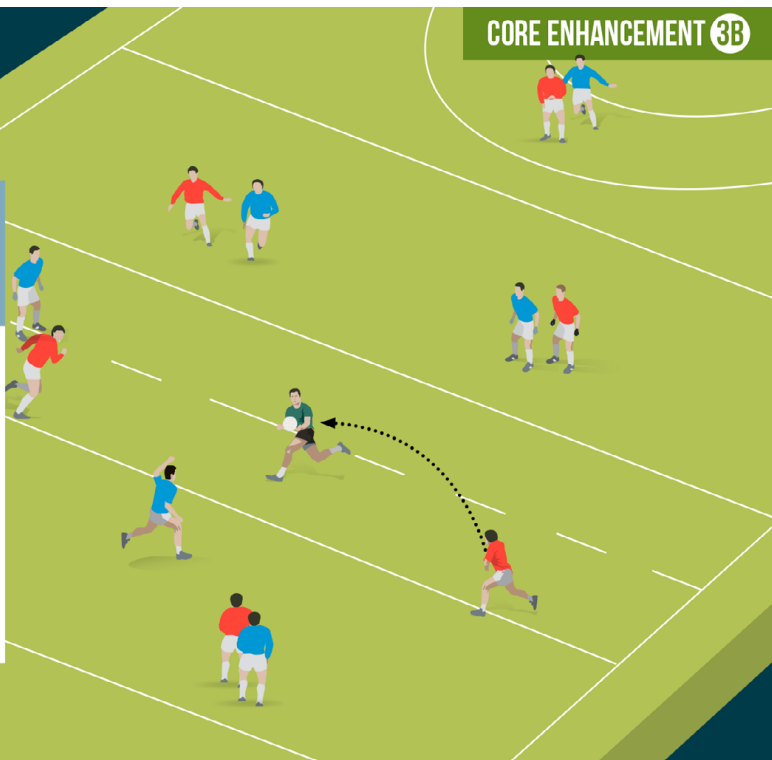
It supports recent team play innovation, where goalkeepers support the attack beyond their halfway line.

It will also allow goalkeepers to position themselves out from their goal area on opposition kickouts, and during general play. This rule promotes the ball to be moved forward by the team in possession, in their half of the field, as the option of 'back passing' to the goalkeeper, will no longer be allowed.

Aligning this rule on the halfway line with the 3/3 structure rule will simplify it for players, match officials and spectators.



WHERE WE ALL BELONG



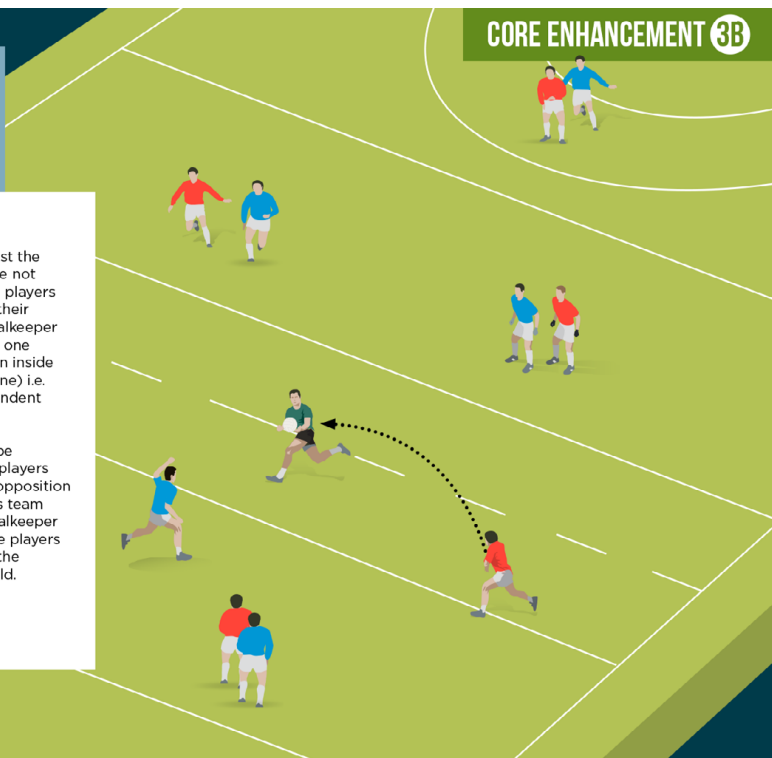
3B. THE GOALKEEPER CAN RECEIVE THE BALL FROM A TEAMMATE BEYOND THE HALFWAY LINE

Expanded notes:

- The Goalkeeper can receive the ball from a team mate only beyond the halfway line. Otherwise, the goalkeeper must be inside his large rectangle to receive the ball from a teammate, who must also be inside the large rectangle
- If the goalkeeper receives a pass inside the large rectangle, the goalkeeper may advance the ball outside the large rectangle without any restriction.
- There are no passing restrictions once the goalkeeper crosses the halfway line.
- If the goalkeeper intercepts the ball from an opposing player anywhere on the pitch, the goalkeeper may advance the ball without restriction.
- The goalkeeper may assist the attack or defence and are not considered as one of the players that must remain inside their halfway line (and the goalkeeper cannot be considered as one of the players that remain inside the opposition halfway line) i.e. the goalkeeper is independent of this rule.
- The Goalkeeper cannot be counted as one of the 3 players that must remain in the opposition half of the field, when his team are defending i.e. the goalkeeper cannot play as one of the players that must remain inside the opposition half of the field.



WHERE WE ALL BELONG



1(e) The Goalkeeper can receive the ball from a teammate beyond the halfway line.

Principle Concept

The rule is to encourage the team in possession to play in a forward direction and not use the goalkeeper as a pivot and an outlet to recycle possession.

It supports recent team play innovation, where goalkeepers support the attack beyond their halfway line.

It will also allow goalkeepers to position themselves out from their goal area on opposition kickouts, and during general play.

This rule promotes the ball to be moved forward by the team in possession, in their half of the field, as the option of 'back passing' to the goalkeeper, will no longer be allowed.

Aligning this rule on the halfway line with the 3/3 structure rule will simplify it for players, match officials and spectators.

Expanded notes:

- The goalkeeper can receive the ball from a teammate only beyond the halfway line. Otherwise, the goalkeeper must be inside his large rectangle to receive the ball from a teammate, who must also be inside the large rectangle.
- If the goalkeeper receives a pass inside the large rectangle, the goalkeeper may advance the ball outside the large rectangle without any restriction.
- There are no passing restrictions once the goalkeeper crosses the halfway line.
- If the goalkeeper intercepts the ball from an opposing player anywhere on the pitch, the goalkeeper may advance the ball without restriction.
- The goalkeeper may assist the attack or defence and is not considered as one of the players that must remain inside their halfway line (and the goalkeeper cannot be considered as one of the players that remain inside the opposition halfway line) i.e. the goalkeeper is independent of this rule.
- The Goalkeeper cannot be counted as one of the 3 players that must remain in the opposition half of the field, when his team are defending i.e. the goalkeeper cannot play as one of the players that must remain inside the opposition half of the field.

Motion (12)

That the following be added to **The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Rule 4 -Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 46-49):**

For a goalkeeper to receive the ball

- from a teammate, when the goalkeeper is outside the large rectangle and in their own half of the field;
- from a teammate who carried the ball inside the large rectangle;
- from a teammate who is inside the large rectangle and who took possession from another teammate who is positioned outside the large rectangle.
- from a teammate after the ball has been played out of the large rectangle unless it has been touched by an opposing player.

Penalty – A free kick from where the pass is made.

Motion (11)

That the following be added as **Rule 1.11 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Fair Play – The Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 41):**

The Goalkeeper may only receive the ball from a teammate:

- (a) Inside the large rectangle when both the goalkeeper and the teammate passing the ball are inside the large rectangle; or
- (b) when the goalkeeper is in the opposition half of the field.

5A. 3/3 STRUCTURE RULE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Having three outfield players from each team inside each half of the pitch will provide a traditional structure for both teams. For the team in possession, this set-up creates outlets and encourages quicker transfer and forward kick-passing of the ball by the attacking team. It should help to reduce the lateral re-cycling and passing of the ball inside the defensive half of the pitch and lead to more exciting play in the attacking areas. It also promotes one-to-one defending; a lost art in the game at present.

The 3/3 Structure Rule will also limit the number of outfield players defending in their own half the pitch to 11, rather than 13 or 14 outfield players, as is often the case currently. This will potentially create more space to attack into for the team in possession. It will also negate the need to reduce teams to 13 a side, as has been suggested by many contributors to the FRC survey. It is this lack of shape, rather than space, that is leading to the stalemate situations in matches.

The proposal also allows the goalkeeper, from the team in possession, to support the attack in the opposition half of the field.



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

Attack

5A. 3/3 STRUCTURE RULE

Expanded notes:

- Both teams must keep 3 outfield players inside each half. These players can be interchangeable i.e. any 3 outfield players.
- Leaving a maximum of 11 outfield players to attack beyond their halfway line, and a maximum of 11 outfield players to defend inside the halfway line.
- The Goalkeepers may assist the attack or defence and are not considered as one of the players that must remain inside their halfway line i.e. the goalkeepers are independent of this rule, subject to restrictions in 1(d) and 1(e).
- The Goalkeeper cannot be counted as one of the 3 players that must remain in the opposition half of the field, when his team are defending i.e. the goalkeeper cannot play as one of the players that must remain inside the opposition half of the field



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

Attack

SET PLAY

2(a) 3/3 Structure Rule

Principle Concept

Having three outfield players from each team inside each half of the pitch will provide a traditional structure for both teams. For the team in possession, this set-up creates outlets and encourages quicker transfer and forward kick-passing of the ball by the attacking team. It should help to reduce the lateral recycling and passing of the ball inside the defensive half of the pitch and lead to more exciting play in the attacking areas. It also promotes one-to-one defending; a lost art in the game at present.

The 3/3 Structure Rule will also limit the number of outfield players defending in their own half of the pitch to 11, rather than 13 or 14 outfield players, as is often the case currently. This will potentially create more space to attack into for the team in possession. It will also negate the need to reduce teams to 13 a side, as has been suggested by many contributors to the FRC survey. It is this lack of shape, rather than space, that is leading to the stalemate situations in matches.

The proposal also allows the goalkeeper, from the team in possession, to support the attack in the opposition half of the field.

Expanded Notes:

- Both teams must keep 3 outfield players inside each half. These players can be interchangeable i.e. any 3 outfield players.
- Leaving a maximum of 11 outfield players to attack beyond their halfway line, and a maximum of 11 outfield players to defend inside the halfway line.
- The Goalkeepers may assist the attack or defence and are not considered as one of the players that must remain inside their halfway line i.e. the goalkeepers are independent of this rule, subject to restrictions in 1(d) and 1(e).
- The Goalkeeper cannot be counted as one of the 3 players that must remain in the opposition half of the field, when his team are defending i.e. the goalkeeper cannot play as one of the players that must remain inside the opposition half of the field.

Penalties

- A player crosses the halfway line in the act of carrying, receiving or intercepting the ball, and leaving less than the minimum required players of their team inside the halfway line.
Penalty - Free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team from the place where the player crossed the halfway line (similar to Rule 2.9).
- A player(s) from both teams moves simultaneously across the halfway line in the act of competing for the ball, leaving less than the minimum required players of their respective teams inside the halfway line.
Penalty - Throw in the ball where the foul occurred. (similar to Rule 2.3 and 4.34).
- The defending team withdraws player(s) and fails to keep 3 players up field in the opposition half of the pitch, in order to gain a numerical advantage in their defence.
Penalty - Free kick on offending team's 20m line in front of scoring space.
- The attacking team withdraws a player(s) and fails to keep 3 players in their own half of the pitch, in order to gain a numerical advantage in their attack.
Penalty - Free kick on offending team's 20m line in front of the scoring space.
- The goalkeeper playing as one of the players that must remain inside the opposition half of the field.
Penalty - Free kick on offending team's 20m line in front of the scoring space.

Advantage Rule for 3/3

- The defending team withdraws a player(s) outside the halfway line to gain a numerical advantage in their defence, the referee may allow an advantage to develop for the attacking team. If no advantage accrues, a Free kick is awarded against the offending team on their 20m line in front of the scoring space.
- The attacking team withdraws a player(s) outside of the halfway line to gain a numerical advantage in their attack and if the ball is turned over by the defending team, the referee may allow an advantage to develop. If no advantage accrues, a Free kick is awarded against the offending team on their 20m line in front of the scoring space.

5B. 3/3 STRUCTURE RULE

Penalties

- A player crosses the halfway line in the act of carrying, receiving or intercepting the ball, and leaving less than the minimum required players of their team inside the halfway line.
Penalty - Free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team from the place where the player crossed the halfway line (similar to Rule 2.9)
- A player(s) from both teams moves simultaneously across the halfway line in the act of competing for the ball, leaving less than the minimum required players of their respective teams inside the halfway line.
Penalty - Throw in the ball where the foul occurred. (similar to Rule 2.3 and 4.34)
- The defending team withdraws player(s) and fails to keep 3 players up field in the opposition half of the pitch, in order to gain a numerical advantage in their defence.
Penalty - Free kick on offending team's 20m line in front of scoring space
- The attacking team withdraws a player(s) and fails to keep 3 players in their own half of the pitch, in order to gain a numerical advantage in their attack.
Penalty - Free kick on offending team's 20m line in front of the scoring space.
- The goalkeeper playing as one of the players that must remain inside the opposition half of the field.
Penalty - Free kick on offending team's 20m line in front of the scoring space.

Advantage Rule for 3/3

The defending team withdraws a player(s) outside the halfway line to gain a numerical advantage in their defence, the referee may allow an advantage to develop for the attacking team. If no advantage accrues, a Free kick is awarded against the offending team on their 20m line in front of the scoring space.

The attacking team withdraws a player(s) outside of the halfway line to gain a numerical advantage in their attack and if the ball is turned over by the defending team, the referee may allow an advantage to develop. If no advantage accrues, a Free kick is awarded against the offending team on their 20m line in front of the scoring space.

Black/Red Cards

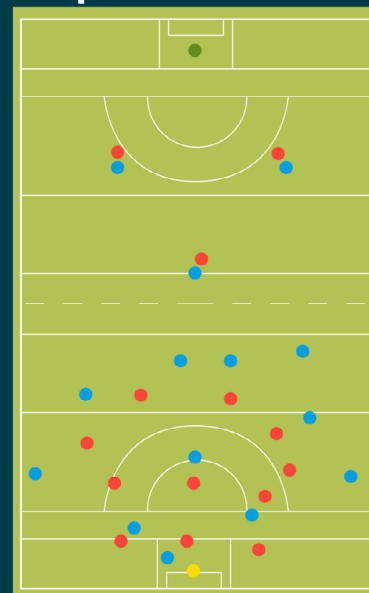
A player is ordered off the field of play, his team may adjust the number of players required inside the midfield line so they will always have a maximum 11 attacking or a maximum 11 defending players (excluding the goalkeeper) i.e. a team will not be disadvantaged defensively or in attack, due to the 3/3 Structure Rule, by having a player ordered off the field of play.

Injured players

A player(s) not seriously injured and who requires treatment, must be treated off the field of play. His team may adjust the number of players required inside the halfway line so as they will always have a maximum 11 attacking or a maximum 11 defending players (excluding the goalkeeper) i.e. a team will not be disadvantaged defensively or in attack, due to the 3/3 Structure Rule, by having a player(s) receiving treatment off the field of play.

3 Up

Blue attacking team
Red defending team



Example of how the 3/3 Structure Rule might look.

Black/Red Cards

- A player is ordered off the field of play, his team may adjust the number of players required inside the midfield line so they will always have a maximum 11 attacking or a maximum 11 defending players (excluding the goalkeeper) i.e. a team will not be disadvantaged defensively or in attack, due to the 3/3 Structure Rule, by having a player ordered off the field of play.

Injured players

- A player(s) not seriously injured and who requires treatment, must be treated off the field of play. His team may adjust the number of players required inside the halfway line so as they will always have a maximum 11 attacking or a maximum 11 defending players (excluding the goalkeeper) i.e. a team will not be disadvantaged defensively or in attack, due to the 3/3 Structure Rule, by having a player(s) receiving treatment off the field of play.

Motion (13)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Fair Play – Rule 2 – Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 42-44):

“Outfield player” means any player other than the goalkeeper.

A team must have at least three outfield players on each side of the half-way line

Exception

Where the number of players on a team is reduced below fifteen, the number of players it is required to keep on each side of the half-way line is reduced accordingly e.g. if there are fourteen players on the team, it must have at least two outfield players on each side of the half-way line

Motion (14)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Rule 4 – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 46-49):

To cross the half-way line in the act of carrying, receiving or intercepting the ball and leaving less than three outfield players on either side of the half-way line.

Penalty - Free kick from the place where the player crossed the half-way line.

Motion (15)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Rule 4 – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 46-49):

For a team to have less than three outfield players on each side of the half-way line other than in the circumstances described in (Motion 14).

Penalty – free kick from the centre point of the offending team’s 20m line.

Motion (50)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Fair Play – Rule 2 – Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 42-44):

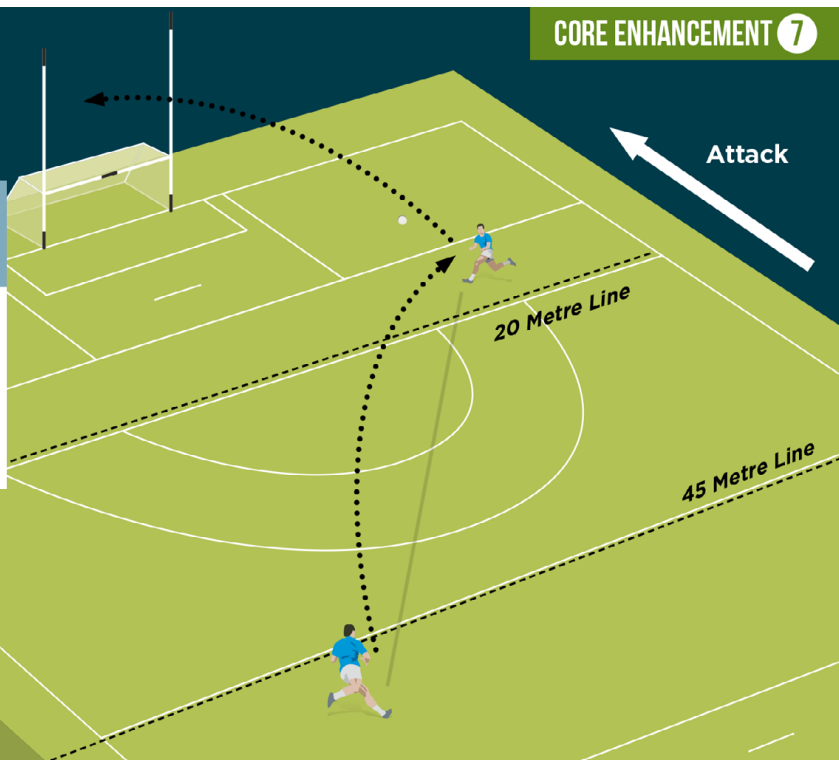
Unless stated otherwise, where a Rule requires a player to be inside or outside a particular line on the Field of Play, the player is required to have both feet inside or outside the line, as appropriate.

7. ADVANCED MARK INSIDE THE 20M LINE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The new Advanced Mark is introduced to encourage long range kick passing and high fielding.

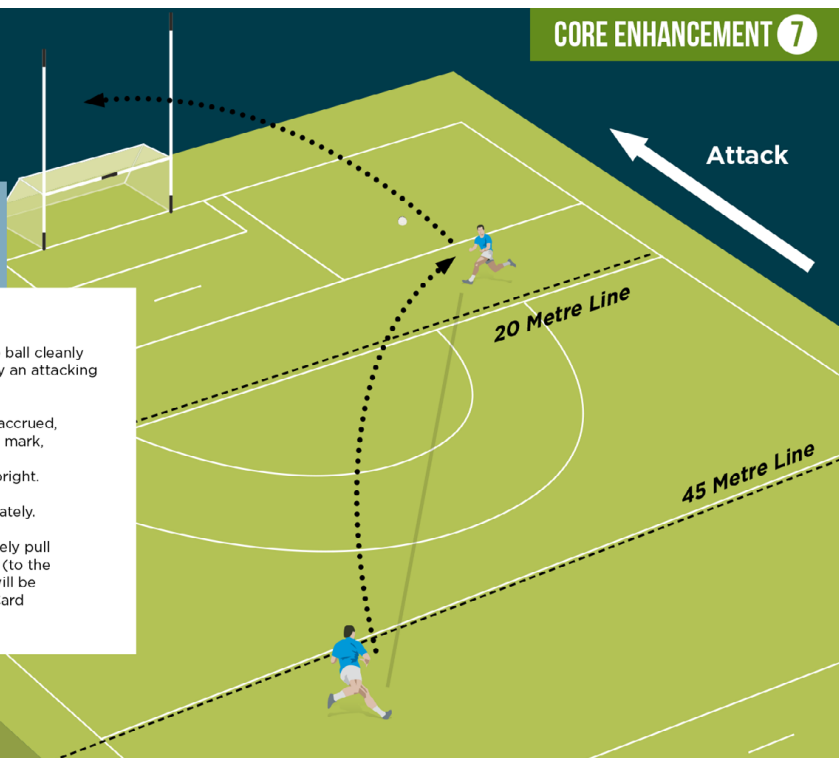
An additional benefit, adding to excitement, will allow the player who made the Mark to continue for a score (either goal or point). If neither is taken, the Mark will be given from where the catch was made.



7. ADVANCED MARK INSIDE THE 20M LINE

Expanded notes:

- An advanced mark is allowed when a player catches the ball cleanly on or inside the 20m line from a kick in play delivered by an attacking player on or before the opposing team's 45m line; and
- The player may play on immediately. If no advantage is accrued, a free kick will be taken from the position of the original mark,
- Or the player may avail of the mark by raising an arm upright.
- If the player opts to play on, he may be tackled immediately.
- Rule 5.41 (a) still applies. As in if the defender "deliberately pull down an opponent" to deny a goal-scoring opportunity (to the player who makes the Advanced Mark), a penalty kick will be awarded and the offender shall be issued with a Black Card and sent to the Sin Bin for 10 minutes.



2(b) Advanced Mark inside the 20m line

Principle Concept

The new Advanced Mark is introduced to encourage long range kick passing and high fielding.

An additional benefit, adding to excitement, will allow the player who made the Mark to continue for a score (either goal or point). If neither is taken, the Mark will be given from where the catch was made.

Expanded notes:

- An advanced mark is allowed when a player catches the ball cleanly on or inside the 20m line from a kick in play delivered by an attacking player on or before the opposing team's 45m line; and
- The player may play on immediately until no advantage is accrued, where a free kick will be taken from the position of the original mark, or the player may immediately avail of the mark by raising an arm upright.
- Rule 5.41 (a) still applies. As in if the defender "deliberately pull down an opponent" to deny a goal-scoring opportunity (to the player who make the Advanced Mark), a penalty kick will be awarded and the offender shall be issued with a Black Card and sent to the Sin Bin for 10 minutes.

(16)

That Rule 2.12 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 44) be amended to read as follows:

The referee shall award a mark in either of the following circumstances:

- When the player catches the ball cleanly from a kick-out, without it touching the ground, on or past the 45m line nearest the kick-out point (**a kick out mark**)
- or
- When a player catches the ball cleanly on or inside the 20m line from a kick in play or from a kick-out mark delivered by an attacking player on or beyond the opposing team's 45m line, and without it touching the ground (**an advanced mark**)

The following procedures shall apply:

(a) Free Kick

The player shall signify to the Referee if the player is availing of the free kick by immediately raising an arm upright and that player then taking the kick from the hands. The free kick shall be taken from the point where the Mark is awarded except in the case of a Mark awarded to an attacking team inside a 13m line when the free shall be taken from the point on the 13m line directly in line with where the Mark is awarded.

Once the player indicates the player is taking the 'Mark', the Referee shall allow up to fifteen seconds for the player to take the kick. If the player delays longer than fifteen seconds, the Referee shall cancel the 'Mark' and throw in the ball between a player from each side.

Once the player indicates they are taking the 'Mark', the opposing players must retreat 13m to allow the player space to take the kick. If an opposing player deliberately blocks or attempts to block the kick within 13m, or if an opposing player impedes the player while the player is taking the kick, the Referee shall penalise the opposing team by bringing the ball forward 13m, up to opponents' 13m line.

If the Referee determines that the player who makes the Mark has been injured in the process and is unable to take the kick, the Referee shall direct the player's nearest team-mate to take the kick, but this may only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

A score may be made from a free awarded for a Mark.

(b) Play on immediately – Kick Out Mark

- A player who makes a kick out mark may play on immediately and**, in this circumstance, the player may not be challenged for the ball until the player carries the ball up to a maximum of four consecutive steps or holds the ball for no longer than the time needed to take four steps and/or makes one act of kicking, hand-passing, bouncing or toe-tapping the ball.
- If the Player is illegally challenged, a free kick shall be awarded to the player's team from the point at which the challenge is made, and this free kick may be taken by any player on that team.

(c) Play on immediately – Advanced Mark

A player who makes an advanced mark may play on immediately, until the Referee deems that no advantage has accrued, at which point a free kick will be taken from the position of the original mark.

FOOTBALL REVIEW COMMITTEE

CORE ENHANCEMENT 4

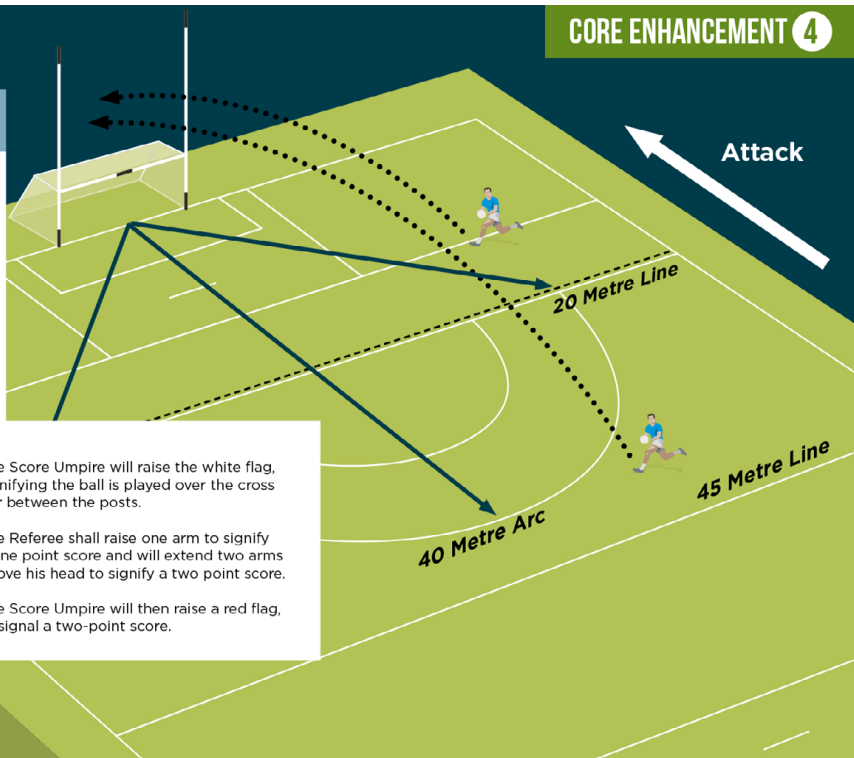
4. 2PT SCORING AREA

Scoring System:

- 2 points scored when the ball is played over the cross bar between the posts outside the 40m arc: the radius centred on the midpoint of the goal line, and arcs back to the 20m line.
- 2 points awarded for a 45.
- 1 point awarded for a point inside the 40m arc or inside the 20m line.
- A goal is equivalent to 4 points.

Expanded notes:

- If a free is conceded outside the 40m arc and, because of dissent or a tactical foul, the ball is taken 50m forward to a more advantageous position, up to opponents' 13m line, the resulting free kick scored is still equivalent to 2 points.
- A point outside the 40m arc will be allowed so long as the standing foot is planted on or outside the 40m arc (similar to sideline rule).
- The Score Umpire will raise the white flag, signifying the ball is played over the cross bar between the posts.
- The Referee shall raise one arm to signify a one point score and will extend two arms above his head to signify a two point score.
- The Score Umpire will then raise a red flag, to signal a two-point score.



GAA

WHERE WE ALL BELONG

FOOTBALL REVIEW COMMITTEE

CORE ENHANCEMENT 4

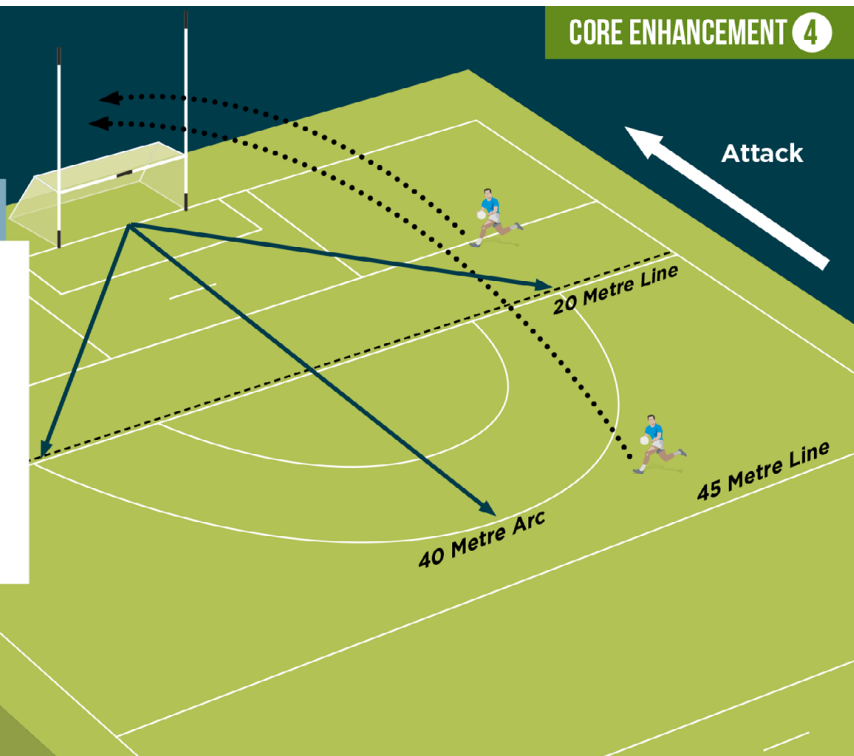
4. 2PT SCORING AREA

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Encourage teams to shoot for long range points by introducing a 40m arc, with two points for that score. This, we believe, will get supporters up off their seats.

This will also ask tactical questions of the defending team, which will may require defending players to push out to the 40m arc or beyond to prevent the team in possession attempting shots for two-point scores. This has the potential to create more space closer to the goal.

To balance this, and encourage more goal scoring and excitement, a goal scored will be awarded four points. A point taken inside the arc and/or inside the 20m line will be awarded one point.



GAA

WHERE WE ALL BELONG

SCORES

3(a) Scoring system associated with the introduction of the 40m arc

Principle concept

Encourage teams to shoot for long range points by introducing a 40m arc, with two points for that score. This, we believe, will get supporters up off their seats.

This will also ask tactical questions of the defending team, which will require defending players to push out to the 40m arc or beyond to prevent the team in possession attempting shots for two-point scores. This has the potential to create more space closer to the goal.

To balance this, and encourage more goal scoring and excitement, a goal scored will be awarded four points.

A point taken inside the arc and/or inside the 20m line will be awarded one point.

Scoring System:

- 2 points scored when the ball is played directly over the cross bar between the posts outside the 40m arc: the radius centred on the midpoint of the goal line, and arcs back to the 20m line.
- 2 points awarded for a 45.
- 1 point awarded for a point inside the 40m arc or inside the 20m line.
- A goal is equivalent to 4 points.

Expanded notes:

- If a free is conceded outside the 40m arc and, because of dissent or a tactical foul, the ball is taken 50m forward to a more advantageous position, up to opponents' 13m line.
- A point outside the 40m arc will be allowed so long as the standing foot is planted on or outside the 40m arc (similar to sideline rule).
- The Score Umpire will raise the white flag, signifying the ball is played over the cross bar between the posts.
- The Referee shall raise one arm to signify a one point score and will extend two arms above his head to signify a two point score.
- The Score Umpire will then raise a red flag, to signal a two-point score.

Motion (17)

That Rule 3.1 – The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Fair Play – Scores – Official Guide Part 2 (page 45) be amended to read as follows:

A goal is scored when the ball is played over the goal-line between the posts and under the crossbar by either team.

A point is scored when the ball is played over the crossbar between the posts by either team, inside the 40m arc or inside the 20m line.

Two points are scored when the ball is played directly over the cross bar between the posts having been kicked by a player who has at least one foot on or outside the 40m arc and without the ball having been touched by any other player.

A goal is equivalent to four points.

The team with the greater final total of points is the winner.

1. 50M ADVANCEMENT FOR TACTICAL FOULING

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Disincentivise tactical fouling, which significantly slows down the play, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where the tactical foul occurred.

Tactical Fouling is defined as “any foul which purposefully and deliberately delays or impedes play”.

50 Metres

1. 50M ADVANCEMENT FOR TACTICAL FOULING

Expanded notes:

- A 50m free advancement is awarded for 'Tactical Fouling'.
- Tactical Fouling is defined as “any foul which purposefully and deliberately delays or impedes play”.
- In the case of an opposing player not retreating 13m to allow space for the free kick to be taken, including a Solo & Go Free kick, to deliberately block or attempt to block the kick within 13m, or to impede the free taker when the player is taking the kick, including a Solo & Go Free kick – this will be deemed a tactical foul.
- The penalty shall be a Free kick 50m in the direction of the goal posts to a more advantageous position than the original free, up to the opponents 13m line.
- If the 50m advancement brings the ball inside the 40m arc (i.e. into the 1 point scoring area), the team in possession may elect to take a free kick on or outside the arc (i.e. to attempt a 2 point score).
- When the team in possession immediately take a Free Kick or a Solo & Go from where tactical foul occurred, this cancels the 50m advancement.

50 Metres

TECHNICAL FOULS

4(a) 50m Advancement for Tactical Fouling

Principle concept

Disincentivise tactical fouling, which significantly slows down the play, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where the tactical foul occurred.

Tactical Fouling is defined as “any foul which purposefully and deliberately delays or impedes play”.

- A 50m free advancement is awarded for ‘Tactical Fouling’.
- Tactical Fouling is defined as “any foul which purposefully and deliberately delays or impedes play”.
- In the case of an opposing player not retreating 13m to allow space for the free kick to be taken, including a Solo & Go Free kick, to deliberately block or attempt to block the kick within 13m, or to impede the free taker when the player is taking the kick, including a Solo & Go Free kick – this will be deemed a tactical foul.
- The penalty shall be a Free kick 50m in the direction of the goal posts to a more advantageous position than the original free, up to the opponents 13m line.
- If the 50m advancement brings the ball inside the 40m arc (i.e. into the 1 point scoring area), the team in possession may elect to take a free kick on or outside the arc (i.e. to attempt a 2 point score).
- When the team in possession immediately take a Free Kick or a Solo & Go from where tactical foul occurred, this cancels the 50m advancement.

Motion (18)

That the following be added to **The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Rule 5 – Aggressive Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 50–54):**

Notwithstanding any other provision in these Rules, where a foul is committed for the purpose of delaying play, the penalty shall, (in addition to being cautioned or ordered off, where appropriate) be a free kick 50m closer to the opponents’ goal than the position where the foul occurred – up to the opponent’s 13m line. However, the opponents of the team conceding the foul may

- take a free kick from the place where the foul occurred
- take a solo & go immediately from that position
- take a free kick from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc

The referee shall signal this penalty by extending either arm sideways.

2. PENALTY FOR DELAYING OR INTERFERING WITH AN OPPONENT TAKING A FREE KICK OR SIDELINE KICK

Expanded notes:

Amend Rule 4.18 To delay an opponent taking a free kick or sideline kick by:

(a) Hitting or kicking the ball away and not returning the ball directly to an opponent on the full.

(b) Not releasing the ball to the opposition.
or

(c) Deliberately not moving back to allow a quick free or solo and go to be taken.

Amend Rule 4.19 To interfere with a player taking a freekick, sideline kick or kickout by jumping up and down, waving hands, or any other physical or verbal interference considered by the referee to be aimed at distracting the player taking the kick.

Exception: A player holding their hands upright shall not constitute an interference.

Penalty for the above foul – Free kick 50m in the direction of the goal posts to a more advantageous position than the original kick – up to opponents' 13m line.



2. PENALTY FOR DELAYING OR INTERFERING WITH AN OPPONENT TAKING A FREE KICK OR SIDELINE KICK

Returning the ball on the full

There is evidence that opposing players do not return or are slow to 'return the ball on the full' to the player who was fouled. This behaviour deliberately slows down and delays play preventing the fouled player taking advantage of an immediate Solo and Go, or from taking a quick Free Kick.

Players should 'return the ball on the full' to the player fouled in a prompt and respectful manner. Returning the ball on the full is also aligned with the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative.

'Returning the ball on the full' means that after a foul is committed, the opposition must return the ball directly to the player fouled in a prompt and respectful manner.



**GIVE
RESPECT
GET
RESPECT**
Our games. Our choice.

4(b) Penalty for delaying or interfering with an opponent taking a free kick or sideline kick, or not handing the ball back to the player fouled.

Principle Concept

Disincentivise teams who purposefully attempt to delay and slow down play after conceding a free kick or side line ball, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where the tactical foul occurred.

There is also evidence where players commit a technical foul (e.g. overcarrying) and do not release the ball to the opposition in a prompt manner, with the aim of delaying play. The current penalty for this infraction is a free kick to the opposition, 13m more advantageous than the place of the original kick – up to the opponents 13m line. A 50m penalty for this infraction will disincentivise this practice of holding onto the ball for the purpose of delaying or slowing down play.

In addition, analysis indicates that players do not return or are slow to hand over the ball to the opposition player who was fouled/ or if the player in possession technically fouled the ball to hand it to the opposition. This behaviour of rolling the ball away, throwing it in the air or handing it to the referee deliberately slows down and delays play and prevents the fouled player, or opposition team taking advantage of an immediate Solo and Go, or from taking a quick Free Kick.

Players should hand over the ball to the player fouled in a prompt and respective manner and is aligned with the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative.

Motion (21)

That Rule 4.19 – The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 47) be amended to read as follows:

To interfere with a player taking a free kick, sideline kick or kickout by jumping up and down, waving hands, or any other physical or verbal interference considered by the referee to be aimed at distracting the player taking the kick.

Exception: A player holding their hands upright shall not constitute an interference.

Penalty for the above foul – Free kick 50m in the direction of the goal posts to a more advantageous position than the original kick – up to opponents' 13m line, **though the player taking the free kick may choose to take it from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc.**

Motion (20)

That Rule 4.18 – The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 47) be amended to read as follows:

To delay an opponent taking a free kick or sideline kick by:

- (a) Hitting or kicking the ball away; **or not “handing over” the ball (ie giving the ball directly to the nearest opposition player, or the player fouled, in a prompt and respectful manner).**
- (b) Not releasing the ball to the opposition, or
- (c) Deliberately not moving back to allow a quick free or solo and go to be taken.

Penalty for the above foul – Free kick 50m in the direction of the goal posts to a more advantageous position than the original kick – up to opponents' 13m line, **though the player taking the free kick may choose to take it from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc.**

MOTION 20, 21

**FOOTBALL
REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

TACTICAL FOULS 2

2. PENALTY FOR DELAYING OR INTERFERING WITH AN OPPONENT TAKING A FREE KICK OR SIDELINE KICK

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Disincentivise teams who purposefully attempt to delay and slow down play after conceding a free kick or side line ball, by introducing a penalty which advances the ball forward 50m from where the tactical foul occurred.

There is also evidence where players commit a technical foul (e.g. overcarrying) and do not release the ball to the opposition in a prompt manner, with the aim of delaying play.

The current penalty for this infraction is a free kick to the opposition, 13m more advantageous than the place of the original kick – up to the opponents 13m line. A 50m penalty for this infraction will disincentivise this practice of holding onto the ball for the purpose of delaying or slowing down play.



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WHERE WE ALL BELONG

6. SOLO & GO RULE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To speed up play when a player is fouled.

Currently a player must have the referee's permission to take a quick free (Rule 2.6 *"With the Referee's consent, a free kick may be taken immediately"*).

Introducing a Solo & Go whereby if a player is fouled, he may immediately take a Solo & Go, will significantly speed up the game and present many advantages to the team in possession.

4 Metres

4(c) Solo & Go**Principle concept**

To speed up play when a player is fouled.

Currently a player must have the Referee's permission to take a quick free (Rule 2.6 "With the Referee's consent, a free kick may be taken immediately").

Introducing a Solo & Go (a Toe-Tap) whereby if a player is fouled, he may immediately take a Solo & Go, will significantly speed up the game and present many advantages to the team in possession.

The Solo and Go must be taken immediately otherwise the free kick must be taken from the place of the foul.

Expanded notes:

- The player does not need the Referee's consent to immediately take the Solo & Go Free kick.
- The referee may allow an advantage up to 4m, in a forward direction, from where the foul was committed to allow the player fouled, and in possession, to take a Solo & Go Free kick.

The Solo & Go must go in a forward direction. Sideways is deemed to be in a forward direction.

- A Solo and Go must be taken immediately. If the Solo and Go is not taken immediately, the free kick must be taken from the place of the foul.
- The player making the Solo & Go cannot be challenged within 4m from the position where the Solo & Go was taken. Penalty: another Free kick shall be awarded 50m in a more advantageous position up to the opposition 13m line.
- Any player on the team of the player fouled can take the Solo & Go immediately – it must be taken 4m from where the foul occurred.
- The ball must be released from the hand(s) before making contact with the foot i.e. a Toe-Tap.
- A Solo & Go cannot be made inside the opposition 20m line.
- If the player/team does not take a Solo and Go immediately, the free kick must be taken from the place of the foul.

Motion (22)

That the following be added to **IMPORTANT TERMS AND DEFINITIONS - FOOTBALL AND HURLING – Official Guide Part 2 (Pages 58-60)**

Solo & Go - To take a free kick immediately by executing a Toe-Tap and playing on.

Motion (23)

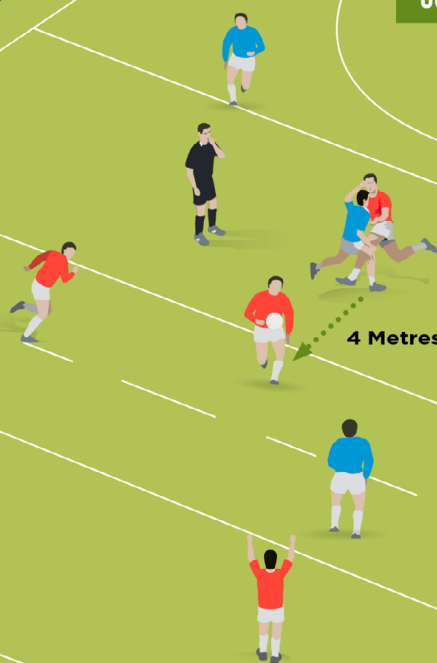
That **Rule 2.5 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 43)** be amended to read as follows:

- A free kick, other than a penalty kick or a 45m free kick as prescribed in Rule 2.8, may be taken from the hands or from the ground **or by means of a solo & go**. A player having indicated their option to the referee shall not be permitted to change that decision.
- The ball shall be stationary when a free kick is taken from the ground.
- Where a solo & go is availed of, it must be taken from a position within four metres of where the foul has occurred and must be taken immediately after the free has been awarded unless the referee has stopped play for any purpose such as to allow for attention to be given to an injured player or to deal with a disciplinary issue. Where a solo & go is not taken immediately, the free must be taken from the hands or from the ground where the foul occurred. The ball must not travel backwards. A player taking a solo & go may not be challenged within four metres of the position where the solo & go was taken. A solo & go may not be taken within the opposition 20m line.**

6. SOLO & GO RULE

Penalties

- The player does not need the Referee's consent to immediately take the Solo & Go Free kick.
- The referee may allow an advantage up to 4m, in a forward direction, from where the foul was committed to allow the player fouled, and in possession, to take a Solo & Go Free kick.
- The Solo & Go must go in a forward direction. Sideways is deemed to be in a forward direction.
- A Solo and Go must be taken immediately. If the Solo and Go is not taken immediately, the free kick must be taken from the place of the foul.
- The player making the Solo & Go cannot be challenged within 4m from the position where the Solo & Go was taken. Penalty: another Free kick shall be awarded 50m in a more advantageous position up to the opposition 13m line.
- Any player on the team of the player fouled can take the Solo & Go – It must be taken 4m from where the foul occurred.
- The ball must be released from the hand(s) before making contact with the foot i.e. not a 'Tap & Go'.
- A Solo & Go cannot be made inside the opposition 20m line.
- If a fouled player or his teammate are going to avail of a free-kick for a shot from the position of the foul, they must indicate this by raised an arm upright. In this instance the free-kick shall be taken from the place where the foul occurred, either from the hand or on the ground, and opposition players must retreat 13m to allow the player space to take the kick. The referee will mark the spot with vanishing foam.
- The player in possession, after indicating they are availing of a free-kick, may not take a Solo and Go. Penalty: Free kick to the opposition.



Motion (24)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Rule 4 - Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 46-49):

To challenge a player taking a solo & go (immediately the free has been awarded) within four metres of the position from where the solo & go is taken - Free kick 50m in the direction of the goal posts to a more advantageous position than the original kick – up to opponents' 13m line. The player taking the free may choose to take the free kick from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc.

Motion (25)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Rule 4 - Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 46-49):

For a player to take a solo & go having indicated to the referee that they were going to take a free kick.

Penalty – free kick to the opposition from where the solo & go was taken.

Motion (26)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Rule 4 - Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 46-49):

For a player to play a ball backwards from a solo & go.

Penalty – free kick to the opposition from where the solo & go was taken.

Motion (27)

That Rule 2.6 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 43) be amended to read as follows:

With the Referee's consent, a free kick may be taken immediately.

Exceptions:

- (i) A penalty kick and a free kick awarded to a team from their opponents' 13m line.
- (ii) **A player taking a solo and go does not require the Referee's consent unless the Referee has stopped play for any purpose such as to allow for attention to be given to an injured player or to deal with a disciplinary issue.**

3. THE 'SQUARE BALL' FROM FREE-KICKS RULE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

During Play a player may enter the small square once the ball is kicked. Currently for Set Play (e.g. a free kick) the ball must enter the small rectangle and then the player can enter. It is very difficult to judge when exactly the ball enters the small square and the different rules cause confusion for players, team officials and spectators.

This rule amendment allows players to enter the small rectangle after the final play of the ball for both general Play and Set Play e.g. once a free kick is taken a player may enter the small rectangle.

Expanded notes:

- **Amend Technical Fouls Rule 4.9:**
For an attacking player to enter opponents' small rectangle during Play (excluding Set Play) and In Set Play, before the final play of the ball into the small rectangle.

4(d) Amend Rule 4.9 (i.e. the 'Square Ball' from free kicks rule)

Principle Concept

During play a player may enter the small square once the ball is kicked. Currently for Set Play (e.g. a free kick) the ball must enter the small rectangle and then the player can enter. It is very difficult to judge when exactly the ball enters the small square and the different rules cause confusion for players, team officials and spectators.

This rule amendment allows players to enter the small rectangle after the final play of the ball for both general Play and Set Play e.g. once a free kick is taken a player may enter the small rectangle.

Motion (28)

That Rule 4.9 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 46) be amended to read as follows:

For an attacking player to enter opponents' small rectangle before the final play of the ball into the small rectangle.

(Exceptions to remain).

1. CYNICAL BEHAVIOUR FOR DELIBERATELY HOLDING UP A PLAYER

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Disincentivise intentional tactical fouling where, for the purposes of gaining an advantage, a player, either in possession or not, is deliberately held up, but not pull down to the ground by an opposing player.

As such the offending player while committing a foul, knows they will avoid a Black Card as they have not pull down the player to the ground (see: Category II Infraction - Rule 5.10 "To deliberately pull down an opponent").

Expanded notes:

Introduce a 5th Category II Infraction (i.e. a Black Card):

"5.15 To deliberately hold up but not pull down an opponent to the ground for the purpose of gaining an advantage."



AGGRESSIVE FOULS

5(a) Category II Infractions – Cynical Behaviour for deliberately holding up a player

Principle Concept

Disincentivise intentional tactical fouling where, for the purposes of gaining an advantage, a player, either in possession or not, is deliberately held up, but not pulled down to the ground by an opposing player. As such the offending player while committing a foul, knows they will avoid a Black Card as they have not pulled down the player to the ground (see: Category II Infraction - Rule 5.10 “To deliberately pull down an opponent”).

Expanded notes:

- Include “to hold up” as a Category II Infraction - Cynical Behaviour.

Motion (29)

That Rule 5.10 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Aggressive Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 51) be amended to read as follows:

To deliberately **hold up or** pull down an opponent.

3. HEAD ON HEAD, SHOULDER ON HEAD OR ELBOW ON HEAD CONTACT

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Following briefings to the FRC by the GAA Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee, formal recognition must be given in rule to behaviours involving either intentional or unintentional head on head, shoulder on head or elbow on head contact in any tackle attempt, including any form of neck restraint or interference with the neck and throat area.

This will assist with the continuing cultural development within the Association of a zero-tolerance approach to head high tackles in Gaelic Games at all levels and should accompany an educational campaign regarding same.

These infractions should be added to the current Category III Infraction description "Behaving in any way which is dangerous to an opponent." (Rule 5.17).



3. HEAD ON HEAD, SHOULDER ON HEAD OR ELBOW ON HEAD CONTACT

Expanded notes:

Amend Rule Category III Infraction, 5.17 to include:

To behave in any way which is dangerous to an opponent. This includes head on head, shoulder on head or elbow on head contact in any tackle attempt, and any form of neck restraint or interference with the neck and throat area.



5(b) Category III infractions – Head on Head, Shoulder on Head or Elbow on Head Contact

Principle Concept

Following briefings to the FRC by the GAA Medical, Scientific and Welfare Committee, formal recognition must be given in rule to behaviors involving either intentional or unintentional head on head, shoulder on head or elbow on head contact in any tackle attempt, including any form of neck restraint or interference with the neck and throat area. This will assist with the continuing cultural development within the Association of a zero-tolerance approach to head high tackles in Gaelic Games at all levels and should accompany an educational campaign regarding same.

While clearly the FRC's remit concerns the game of Gaelic Football, the MSWC's recommendation is that this formal recognition in rule must apply to both football and hurling. These infractions should be added to the current "Behaving in any way which is dangerous to an opponent" rules, as outlined below:

Expanded notes:

- "To be the third Player into a melee except where a Player's sole intention is to remove a team-mate from the incident – the third man is deemed to have incited and contributed to the melee".

Motion (30)

That the following be added to - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Rule 5 - Aggressive Fouls – Category III Infractions - Official Guide Part 2 (page 51):

To strike or attempt to strike an opponent to the head or face with minimal force.

and

That the following be added to - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Rule 5 - Aggressive Fouls – Category IV Infractions - Official Guide Part 2 (page 52):

To strike or attempt to strike an opponent to the head or face either with force or causing injury.

Motion (31)

That the following be added to - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Rule 5 - Aggressive Fouls – Category III Infractions - Official Guide Part 2 (page 51):

To interfere with or to apply any form of restraint to the neck or throat area of an opponent.

2. TO CONTRIBUTE TO A MELEE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Contributing to a melee is currently a Category III Infraction (Rule 5.19). Evidence suggests that match officials are reluctant to enforce this rule (i.e. sending off a player who is contributing to a melee), unless an attempted kick or strike or other Category III Infractions were observed during the melee. The FRC rule amended moves 'contributing to a melee' to a Category II Infraction.

This will assist match officials who are more likely to issue a Black Card/10 min Sin Bin to those player(s) who join in and contribute to the fracas/melee with behaviour such as pushing and shoving/ grappling with opposition players etc, which is not acceptable and reflects poorly on our game but might not be deemed a Category III Infraction/ Red card offence.

The threat of a black card, which is more likely to be actioned on by match officials, will discourage players from contributing to a melee.

2. TO CONTRIBUTE TO A MELEE

Expanded notes:

Add to Category II Infractions:

"To be the third Player into a melee except where a Player's sole intention is to remove a team-mate from the incident - the third man is deemed to have incited and contributed to the melee."

Penalty for the above foul - Order the offender off for ten minutes in the Sin Bin by showing the offender a Black Card..... Etc."

5(c) Category II Infraction - To Contribute to a melee

Principle Concept

Contributing to a melee is currently a Category III Infraction (Rule 5.19). Evidence suggests that match officials are reluctant to enforce this rule (i.e. sending off a player who is contributing to a melee), unless an attempted kick or strike or other Category III Infractions were observed during the melee. The FRC rule amended moves 'contributing to a melee' to a Category II Infraction.

This will assist match officials who are more likely to issue a Black Card/10 min Sin Bin to those player(s) who join in and contribute to the fracas/melee with behaviour such as pushing and shoving/ grappling with opposition players etc, which is not acceptable and reflects poorly on our game but might not be deemed a Category III Infraction/ Red card offence. The threat of a black card, which is more likely to be actioned on by match officials, will discourage players from contributing to a melee.

Expanded notes:

- "To be the third Player into a melee except where a Player's sole intention is to remove a team-mate from the incident – the third man is deemed to have incited and contributed to the melee".

Motion (32)

That Rule 5.19 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Aggressive Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 51) be amended to read as follows:

To contribute to a melee by being the third or subsequent player into a melee except where that player enters the melee for the sole purpose of removing a teammate.

And that this infraction is recategorised as a Category II Infraction – Cynical Behaviour.

4. ADVANTAGE RULE

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

This rule supports the ambition of the Association to make Gaelic Games the most attractive amateur sport in the world to play and watch. The current advantage rule (5.40) permits "When an Aggressive Foul is committed, the Referee may allow the play to continue if the referee considers that this presents the potential of a goal-scoring opportunity or another advantage to the team offended by creating or capitalising on time and space". Although this is a well written rule, the second paragraph of Rule 5.40 limits the advantage to five seconds.

The FRC proposal will allow the referee to exercise more judgement without the limitation of 5 seconds (this practice has been observed in this year's football and hurling championships) and allows the advantage to develop for the team in possession until a clear and real advantage has been accrued or if no advantage is accruing.



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

4. ADVANTAGE RULE

Expanded notes:

Amend 2nd paragraph of Rule 5.40:

- The Referee shall signal that advantage by raising an arm upright and shall allow the advantage to run by maintaining that arm in the upright position until such time it becomes clear that no advantage has accrued.
- If the referee deems that the non-offending team has gained a clear and real advantage, or that enough ground has been made forward, the advantage ends and the referee will indicate that the team has made advantage by saying "advantage over", lowers his arm and play continues as normal
- If the referee deems that the team in possession has had it long enough and no positive advantage is accruing, he will say "no advantage gained" and will take the ball back to the point of the infraction.
- If the non-offending team commits an infringement before they have accrued an advantage, the referee will stop play and apply the penalty for the first infringement.
- If the defending team commits another foul when the advantage is ongoing, the free will be given from the more favourable position.
- Advantage must not be applied if it is suspected that a player is seriously injured.



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

5(d) Advantage Rule

Principle Concept

This rule supports the ambition of the Association to make Gaelic Games the most attractive amateur sport in the world to play and watch. The current advantage rule (5.40) permits *“When an Aggressive Foul is committed, the Referee may allow the play to continue if the referee considers that this presents the potential of a goal-scoring opportunity or another advantage to the team offended by creating or capitalising on time and space”*. Although this is a well written rule, the second paragraph of Rule 5.40 limits the advantage to five seconds.

The FRC proposal will allow the referee to exercise more judgement without the limitation of 5 seconds (this practice has been observed in this year’s football and hurling championships) and allows the advantage to develop for the team in possession until a clear and real advantage has been accrued or if no advantage is accruing.

Motion (33)

That Rule 5.40 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Aggressive Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 53) be amended to read as follows:

When a Foul is committed, the Referee may allow the play to continue if the Referee considers that this presents the potential of an advantage to the team offended.

The Referee shall signal that advantage by raising an arm upright and shall allow the advantage to run by maintaining that arm in the upright position until it becomes clear that no advantage has accrued.

If the referee deems that the team offended has gained a clear advantage, the advantage ends and the referee will indicate that by saying “advantage over”, lowering their arm and allowing play to continue as normal.

If the referee deems that no advantage is accruing to the team offended, the referee will indicate that by saying “no advantage gained” and will take the ball back to the point of the infraction.

If a player from the team offended commits a technical foul before they have accrued an advantage, the referee will stop play and apply the penalty for the first infringement.

If a player from the team offended commits an aggressive foul before they have accrued an advantage, the referee will apply the penalty for that subsequent aggressive foul.

If a player from the team which has committed the foul commits another foul when the advantage is ongoing, the free will be awarded from the more favourable position to the team offended of the location of the two fouls.

Advantage shall not be applied if the referee suspects that a player is seriously injured.
The referee shall apply all other relevant disciplinary action even when advantage is being allowed.

(This Rule to be relocated in The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Fair Play - Set Play – Official Guide Part 2)

(1)

That the penalty for the foul described in Rule 6.4 - The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Dissent – Official Guide Part 2 (page 57) be amended to read as follows:

The free kick already awarded shall be taken from a place 50m more advantageous than the place of original kick – up to opponents’ 13m line. The player taking the free may choose to take the free kick from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc. Further dissent on an occasion shall be considered as a breach of Rule 6.1 and shall be penalised accordingly.

1. TO SHOW DISSENT WITH THE REFEREE'S DECISION TO AWARD A FREE KICK TO THE OPPOSING TEAM

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To reinforce the importance of showing respect to Referees, the penalty for dissent towards referees is made more severe to establish that dissent towards Referees is unacceptable. The FRC recommendation below in relation to the Referees communicating with teams prior to the throw-in will help to improve the relationships between players and match officials.

This proposal supports, in a meaningful way, the Association's 'Give Respect - Get Respect' Initiative seeking to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.



1. TO SHOW DISSENT WITH THE REFEREE'S DECISION TO AWARD A FREE KICK TO THE OPPOSING TEAM

FRC Recommendation:

Referees are encouraged to communicate with teams in advance of the throw-in (see FRC 2012/14 recommendation).

The team captain, or a nominated deputy if the captain is goalkeeper or was no longer on the field, are the only players that may speak to the referee to seek clarification.

Expanded notes:

Amend Rule 6.4:

To Show dissent by forcefully challenging the Referee's decision to award a free kick to the opposing team, either verbally or by gesturing.

Penalty - The free kick already awarded shall be taken 50m more advantageous than the place of original kick - up to opponents' 13m line. Further dissent on an occasion shall be considered as a breach of Rule 6.1 and shall be penalised accordingly.



DISSENT

6(a) To Show dissent with the Referee's decision to award a free kick to the opposing team.

Principle Concept

To reinforce the importance of showing respect to Referees, the penalty for dissent towards referees is made more severe to establish that dissent towards Referees is unacceptable. The FRC recommendation below in relation to the Referees communicating with teams prior to the throw-in will help to improve the relationships between players and match officials.

This proposal supports, in a meaningful way, the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative seeking to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.

Motion (34)

That the penalty for the foul described in Rule 6.4 – The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Dissent – Official Guide Part 2 (page 57) be amended to read as follows:

The free kick already awarded shall be taken from a place 50m more advantageous than the place of original kick – up to opponents' 13m line. The player taking the free may choose to take the free kick from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc. Further dissent on an occasion shall be considered as a breach of Rule 6.1 and shall be penalised accordingly.

Motion (35)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Rule 6 – Dissent – Official Guide Part 2 (page 57):

For a player who is not the team captain, or a nominated deputy to speak to the referee to seek clarification of a decision made by the referee.

Penalty - A free kick from a place 50m closer to the opponents' goal than the position where the foul occurred – up to the opponent's 13m line. The player taking the free may choose to take the free kick from outside the 40m arc though the application of this Rule would otherwise result in a free kick from inside the 40m arc.

3. TO SHOW DISSENT BY A PLAYER AT U18 OR YOUNGER GRADES

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

The GAA 'Give Respect - Get Respect' initiative seeks to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.

The initiative calls for the promotion of the Code of Behaviour at U18 and younger grades, emphasising to players, regardless of age, that they should at all times respect their own fellow team members, their opponents and at all times respect the decisions of match officials.

The introduction of this Black Card offence for players at U18 or younger grades is aligned with the 'Give Respect - Get Respect' initiative and emphasises to players that dissent towards a match official is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the Association.

The rule focuses on the player who shows dissent, rather than penalising the team, as the player who is ordered off for 10 minutes can be immediately replaced by a teammate for the duration of the 10 minutes.

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WHERE WE ALL BELONG



3. TO SHOW DISSENT BY A PLAYER AT U18 OR YOUNGER GRADES

Expanded notes:

Insert new rule in Rule 6 - DISSENT:

At U18 or younger grades, to show dissent by challenging verbally, or aggressively gesturing, the authority of a Referee, Score Umpire, Line Umpire or Sideline Official, or remonstrating in an aggressive manner.

- Order the offender off for ten minutes in the Sin Bin by showing the offender a Black Card. The offending player can be replaced immediately by a teammate for the duration of the ten minutes.

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6(b) To Show dissent by a player at U18 or younger grades.

Principle Concept

The GAA 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative seeks to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.

The initiative calls for the promotion of the Code of Behaviour at U18 and younger grades, emphasising to players, regardless of age, that they should at all times respect their own fellow team members, their opponents and at all times respect the decisions of match officials.

The introduction of this Black Card offence for players at U18 or younger grades is aligned with the 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative and emphasises to players that dissent towards a match official is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the Association.

The rule focuses on the player who shows dissent, rather than penalising the team, as the player who is ordered off for 10 minutes can be immediately replaced by a teammate for the duration of the 10 minutes.

Motion (37)

That the following be added to **The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Foul Play – Rule 6.4 – Dissent – Official Guide Part 2 (page 57)**:

Additional penalty at U18 or younger grades – Order the offender off for ten minutes in the Sin Bin by showing the offender a Black Card. The offending player can be replaced immediately by a teammate for the duration of the ten minutes.

1. STOP CLOCK (PUBLIC CLOCK)

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

Following a proposal by FRC 2012/2013, at the November 2013 meeting of Ard Chomhairle, it was agreed that the new Clock/Hooter system should be trialled during the Sigerson and Fitzgibbon Cup Finals in 2014 "after which Ard Chomhairle will finalise its views on its implementation". Protocols adopted for these Trials were approved by Coiste Bainisti.

The trial was carried out over six games. A report was completed after the trials which outlined that "we believe that the Clock/Hooter system will be an addition to the presentation of our inter county championship games. However, we also believe, that our playing rules at present do not necessarily provide for what it was hoped the Clock/Hooter system would achieve. It is our view that if the system is implemented without changes to the existing playing rules, it creates considerable risk for the Association". Following this report no actions were completed.

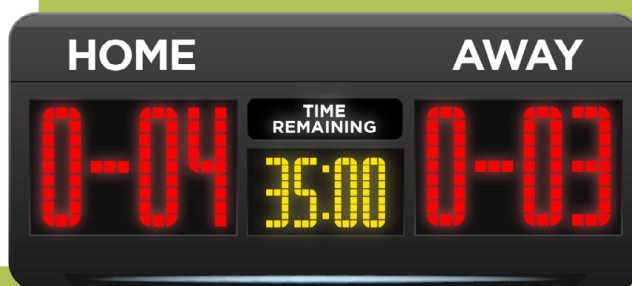
FRC 2024/2025 propose to introduce the Stop Clock, with rule change proposals, which will bring clarity to timekeeping for officials, players, mentors and spectators. This will also bring more excitement to the games, as witnessed in Ladies Football.



Clock Start



Clock Stop



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

1. STOP CLOCK (PUBLIC CLOCK)

Expanded notes:

- The clock will count down (where possible).
- The Stop Clock is started and stopped by a match official (the '5th official') on the signal of the Referee.
- To start the clock the Referee will signal by winding one arm like a windmill and blowing the whistle.
- To stop the clock the Referee will signal by crossing both hands over his head and blowing his whistle.
- The clock will be stopped by the Referee for: Injuries that require on-field treatment, issuing yellow, black or red cards, all substitutions, a melee or for a deliberate or incidental delay.
- The clock will run through kick outs, free kicks and 45's. After the hooter sounds, the end of the first half or full time is called immediately.



Clock Start



Clock Stop



Exceptions when the hooter sounds:

- If the hooter sounds, a score counts if the ball is in flight.
- If the hooter sounds while a team is in possession and the ball goes out for the 45, it may be taken.
- If a free kick is awarded before the hooter sounds, the free kick may be taken and full time is called if a point or goal is scored, or a wide or if the ball is touched by a team-mate.
- If the hooter sounds while a team is in possession and a free kick conceded by the opposition, the resulting free kick will be taken. Full time is called if a point or goal is scored, or if the ball goes wide or if the ball is touched by a team-mate.



WHERE WE ALL BELONG

7(e) RULE 3 - TIME: Stop Clock (or Public Time Clock)**Principle Concept**

Following a proposal by FRC 2012/2013, at the November 2013 meeting of Ard Chomhairle, it was agreed that the new Clock/Hooter system should be trialled during the Sigerson and Fitzgibbon Cup Finals in 2014 “after which Ard Chomhairle will finalise its views on its implementation”. Protocols adopted for these Trials were approved by Coiste Bainisti.

The trial was carried out over six games. A report was completed after the trials, which outlined that “we believe that the Clock/Hooter system will be an addition to the presentation of our inter county championship games. However, we also believe, that our playing rules at present do not necessarily provide for what it was hoped the Clock/Hooter system would achieve. It is our view that if the system is implemented without changes to the existing playing rules, it creates considerable risk for the Association”. Following this report no actions were completed.

FRC 2024/2025 propose to introduce the Stop Clock, with rule change proposals, which will bring clarity to timekeeping for officials, players, mentors and spectators. This will also bring more excitement to the games, as witnessed in Ladies Football.

Motion (42)

That Rule 3.2 - Rules of Specification – Time - Official Guide Part 2 (page 8) be amended by the addition of the following:

Where a public clock and a hooter are available, they shall be used, subject to Regulations issued by Central Council.

Motion (43)

That the following be added to Rule 1.2(vi) - Rules of Control - Control Of The Games - Match Officials – Duties of the Referee - Official Guide Part 2 (page 12):

Where a public clock and hooter are in use, the referee shall signal

- when the clock should be stopped, by crossing both hands overhead and blowing the whistle.
- when the clock should be started or restarted, by winding one arm and blowing the whistle.

5. EMPOWERING LINE UMPIRES

PRINCIPLE CONCEPT

To promote increased cooperation between Referees and Line Umpires, and to assist Referees' decision making with timely information, the rule book requires amendment to immediately allow Line Umpires bring to the attention of the Referee, rather than in a break in play as per the current rule, any instance of foul play in addition to immediately assisting a referee in determining the validity of a score.



8(f) RULE 3 – LINE UMPIRES: Empowering Line Umpires**Principle Concept**

To promote increased cooperation between Referees and Line Umpires, and to assist Referees' decision making with timely information, the rule book requires amendment to immediately allow Line Umpires bring to the attention of the Referee, rather than in a break in play as per the current rule, any instance of foul play in addition to immediately assisting a referee in determining the validity of a score and an advanced mark. The Referee's decision on any question of fact shall remain unchanged, all other match officials shall operate under the direction of the Referee.

Motion (48)

That Rule 3.1(v) - Rules of Control – Control Of The Games - Match Officials – Line Umpires - Official Guide Part 2 (page 15) be amended to read as follows :

The Line Umpires, where neutral, shall bring to the attention of the Referee, any instances of foul play or unauthorised incursions onto the field of play or other infraction of Rule by a team official, which have not been noticed by the Referee, by raising their flag.

They may also assist in determining (i) the validity of a score and, in Gaelic Football, (ii) a foul as set out in (see Motions 14 & 15) and (iii) the validity of an advanced mark.

ADDITIONAL MOTIONS FOR APPROVAL

Motion (1)

That Rule changes made at this Special Congress be adopted on a temporary basis for 2025 and that Central Council shall be entitled to rescind or amend any Rule changes made by this Special Congress upon a motion submitted by the Management Committee.

6(b) The team Captain or a nominated deputy are the only players to speak with the Referees to seek clarification on a decision made by the referee.

Principle Concept

The previous FRC spoke of the need to increase communication between referees and players. In order to reinforce respect for match officials and to increase the communication between a team and the referee the FRC are propose that the team captain, or a nominated deputy are the only player to speak to the referee to seek clarification of a decision made by the referee.

Motion (36)

That the following be added to The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football – Rules of Fair Play – Rule 1 – The Play – Official Guide Part 2 (pages 40-41):

The team captain, or a nominated deputy if the captain is the goalkeeper or is no longer on the field, are the only players who may speak to the referee to seek clarification of a decision made by the referee.

7(a) RULE 1 – THE FIELD OF PLAY: Dashed Midlines

Principle Concept

The introduction of a midfield line (a broken line) will assist the introduction of some of the new enhancements and make it easier for match officials to control the game. Namely, it delineates a boundary where:

- i. The goalkeeper of the team in possession can receive a pass from a teammate out the field beyond the line;
- ii. Both teams must keep 3 players inside the line throughout the game.

It will also simplify these rules for players and spectators.

It should also be noted that some GAA pitches are not marked with 65m lines and, in these cases, a midfield line will be relatively easy to mark.

Motion (38)

That the diagram of The Field of Play for Hurling and Gaelic Football – Official Guide Part 2 (page 4) be amended to show the dashed midlines.

Motion (39)

That Rule 1.2(i) – Rules of Specification – The Field of Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 5) be amended to read as follows:

At distances of 13m, 20m, 45m and 65m (Hurling) from each endline, lines shall be marked across the field parallel to the endline. The intersections of these lines and of the endlines with the sidelines shall be marked by flags.

The midline of the field of play shall be marked parallel to the endlines and shall have a length of 10m in the centre of the pitch. In addition, lines of 5m in length shall be marked out from the 10m midline line, at intervals of 5m across the field parallel to the endline. The intersections of these dashed lines with the sideline shall be marked by flags.

Boundary lines are part of the field of play.

7(b) RULE 1 – THE FIELD OF PLAY: 40m arc

Principle Concept

The introduction on a new 40m arc will require an amendment to the Official Guide – Part 2, Rule 1 – The Field of Play.

Motion (40)

That Rule 1.5 – Rules of Specification – The Field of Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 6) be amended by the addition of the following:

A semi-circular arc of 40m centred on the mid-point of the goal line, shall be marked outside of each 20m line.

Motion (41)

That the diagram of The Field of Play for Hurling and Gaelic Football – Official Guide Part 2 (page 4) be amended to show the 40m arc.

8(a) RULE 1 – CONTROL OF THE GAMES BY MATCH OFFICIALS: Indicate two-point score

Principle Concept

With the introduction of the 40m arc and associated two point score, it will be difficult for the Score Umpire to know if a kick was taken outside, on or inside the 40m arc.

To allow for this, the Score Umpire will signal if the ball is played over the cross bar and between the posts by raising the white flag. The Referee will then make a signal to indicate if the shot was taken on or outside the 40m arc – extending both arms above the head to signify a two-point score; or by extending one arm above the head to signify a one-point score if the shot was taken inside the 40m arc, or inside the 20m line. The Score Umpire will then raise a red flag to signal a two-point score.

There will be no change to the Score Umpire signal for a goal.

Motion (44)

That the following be added to Rule 1.2 – Rules of Control – Control Of The Games – Match Officials – Duties of the Referee – Official Guide Part 2 (page 12):

in Gaelic Football, to signal a one point score, by extending one arm above the head and to signal a two point score by extending both arms above the head.

8(b) RULE 1 – CONTROL OF THE GAMES BY MATCH OFFICIALS: 1 v 1 for the throw-in

Principle Concept

Fouling consistently occurs at the commencement of each half during 2 v 2 throw-ins. The fouls either occur as the ball is thrown in, or as one of the midfield players gains possession.

The 1 v 1 throw in will make for an improved spectacle, as the player gaining possession will have the opportunity to immediately attack, with the other two midfielders positioned on opposite sidelines.

Motion (45)

That Rule 1.3(ii) – Rules of Control – Control Of The Games – Match Officials – Commencing Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 13) be amended by adding the following as Rule 1.3(ii)(b):

Gaelic Football

One Player from each team shall stand on their own defensive side of the 10m dashed halfway line, and shall face the referee, for the throw-in. A second player on each team shall be positioned on the opposite side line, centred on the sideline and facing the players contesting the throw-up. These players will swap sides for start of the second half. The other players shall be in their respective positions behind the 45m line.

The existing Rule 1.3(ii) to be numbered as 1.3(ii)(a) and headed Hurling.

8(c) RULE 1 – CONTROL OF THE GAMES BY MATCH OFFICIALS: Coin Toss**Principle Concept**

This amendment is required as teams will now line out their second midfielder in a position on the sideline opposite to the Referee throwing in the ball. To avoid these two players grappling with each other, they will take opposite sides of the pitch. As one of these players will face the two players contesting the throw-in, and to ensure fairness, the players taking up positions on the sideline will change sideline positions for the second half throw-in.

The team that loses the coin toss (to choose ends) will have the choice of which sideline to position the second midfielder on for the start of the first half.

Motion (46)

That Rule 1.3(i) Rules of Control – Control Of The Games – Match Officials – Commencing Play – Official Guide Part 2 (page 13) be amended by adding the following as Rule 1.3(i)(b):

Gaelic Football

The Referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the team captains. The team who wins the coin toss will choose ends; the other team will choose which sideline their player will stand on for the throw in. Teams will change ends and the sidelines on which their players are positioned for the throw at the start of the second half.

This procedure shall be repeated for Extra Time, where played.

The existing Rule 1.3(i) to be numbered as 1.3(i)(a) and headed Hurling.

8(d) RULE 2 – SCORE UMPIRES: Raising white flag**Principle Concept**

With the introduction of the 40m arc and associated two-point score, it will be difficult for the Score Umpire to know if a kick was taken outside, on or inside the 40m arc.

To allow for this, the Score Umpire will signal if the ball is played over the cross bar and between the posts by raising the white flag. The Referee will then make a signal to indicate if the shot was taken on or outside the 40m arc – extending both arms above the head to signify a two-point score; or by extending one arm above the head to signify a one-point score if the shot was taken inside the 40m arc, or inside the 20m line.

There will be no change to the Score Umpire signal for a goal.

Motion (47)

That Rule 2.2(i)(c) - Rules of Control – Control Of The Games – Match Officials – Score Umpires - Official Guide Part 2 (page 15) be amended to read as follows:

A score by raising a green flag for a goal or a white flag for a point and, in addition, a red flag, to signal a two-point score in Gaelic Football, after the referee has awarded it by raising two arms above their head.

8(g) RULE 5 – MISCONDUCT AT GAMES BY TEAM OFFICIALS: On field free kick awarded to opposition**Principle Concept**

The aim of this rule amendment is to discourage misconduct by Team Officials and non-playing substitutes towards game officials. The penalty for such misconduct will be the concession of a free kick to the opposition on the offending team's 13m line.

This proposal supports, in a meaningful way, the Association's 'Give Respect – Get Respect' initiative, seeking to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner at all ages and regardless of competition where players, coaches, referees and spectators Give Respect and Get Respect from each other.

Motion (49)

That the following be added to - Rules of Control – Control Of The Games - Rule 5 – Misconduct At Games By Team Officials - Official Guide Part 2 (pages 16-19) :

In Gaelic Football, in addition to the above penalties, the team of the official concerned shall be penalised as follows:

A free kick on the offending team's 13m line at the centre of the scoring space or, at the option of the free taker, a free kick from the apex of the arc. Where that option is availed of, two points shall be awarded for a score from such a free kick where the ball crosses the crossbar between the posts.



**REGULATIONS DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC CLOCK AND HOOTER ISSUED BY CENTRAL COUNCIL UNDER
RULE 3.41(E) CENTRAL COUNCIL – POWERS AND FUNCTIONS – OFFICIAL GUIDE PART 1 (PAGE 28).**

THE RULES

Rule 3.2 - Rules of Specification – Time - Official Guide Part 2 (page 8).

Where a public clock and a hooter are available, they shall be used, subject to Regulations issued by Central Council.

Rule 1.2(vi) - Rules of Control - Control of the Games - Match Officials – Duties of the Referee - Official Guide Part 2 (page 12):

Where a public clock and hooter are in use, the referee shall signal.

When the clock should be stopped by crossing both hands overhead and blowing the whistle.

When the clock should be started or restarted by winding one arm and blowing the whistle.

REGULATIONS

1. A Public Clock is a clock which is visible to Players, Officials and Spectators attending a game.
2. The Council or Committee in Charge shall decide whether a Public Clock and/or Hooter shall be used.
3. The clock will count down (where possible).
4. The Stop Clock is started and stopped by a match official (the 'time official') on the signal of the Referee.
5. To start the clock the Referee will signal by rotating one arm and blowing the whistle.
6. To stop the clock the Referee will signal by crossing both hands over his head and blowing his whistle.
7. The clock will be stopped by the Referee for:
 - a. Injuries that require on-field treatment
 - b. issuing yellow, black or red cards,
 - c. all substitutions,
 - d. a melee or
 - e. for a deliberate or incidental delay.
8. The clock will run through kick outs, free kicks and 45's.
9. After the hooter sounds, the end of the first half or full time is called. However, if a ball is in flight when the hooter sounds and it results in a score, without a player touching the ball after the hooter has sounded, that score shall be allowed. If a free kick has been awarded but not taken, before the hooter sounds, the free can be taken either from the hand or from the ground (but not by means of solo & go) and, if it results in a score, without any other player touching the ball, that score shall be awarded.



GUIDELINES TO ASSIST REFEREES IN COMPLYING WITH RULE 1.2(VIII) - RULES OF CONTROL - CONTROL OF THE GAMES - MATCH OFFICIALS – DUTIES OF THE REFEREE - OFFICIAL GUIDE PART 2 (PAGE 12) ISSUED BY CENTRAL COUNCIL UNDER RULE 3.41(F) - CENTRAL COUNCIL – POWERS AND FUNCTIONS – OFFICIAL GUIDE PART 1 (PAGE 28).

RULE

Rule 1.2(viii) - Rules of Control - Control of the Games - Match Officials – Duties of the Referee - Official Guide Part 2 (page 12).

To indicate the place from which all free kicks or free pucks shall be taken.

GUIDELINES

- In Gaelic Football, referees should be in possession of vanishing white foam in a cannister, or other container carried in a holster affixed to a belt or shorts.
- Where a free is being taken inside the 65m line, other than by way of solo and go, the referee should use vanishing white foam to mark the place from where the free kick is to be taken.
- Where a referee does not have vanishing white foam, the referee should mark the place from where such a free kick is to be taken by some other means.

PENALTY

The penalty for a breach is set out in The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football - Rules of Foul Play – Technical Fouls – Official Guide Part 2 (page 48).

4.24

- (a) To advance the ball deliberately from the place at which a free kick or sideline kick is to be taken.
- (b) To take a sideline kick from a position not outside the boundary line.

Penalty for the above foul -

- (i) Cancel free kick or sideline kick.
- (ii) Throw in the ball where the foul occurred except as provided under Exceptions (v) and (vi) of Rule 2.2



FRC INTERIM REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1: ENFORCEMENT OF FOUR STEPS

Evidence suggests that Referees, at all levels and grades, are inconsistent in enforcing Rule 1.4 (a) i.e. the four-step rule, in order to “let the game flow”. Throughout FRC stakeholder engagement, when this matter was raised, it is clear that there is no desire to increase the number of steps allowed while in possession.

The current lack of enforcement of the four-step rule makes the defender’s role more difficult as it has become unpredictable as to when the player in possession will release the ball to either bounce or make a solo.

By enforcing the four-step rule, tackle technique will be improved and has the potential to eradicate unsightly tackling/contact when the player in possession attempts to run past an opponent, often over carrying the ball.

Enforcing the four-step rule will focus practicing the Gaelic football skill of soloing the ball and promote the use of evasive skills such as a dummy solo, side-step, etc, to evade opponents rather than overcarrying the ball, which is more often than not the case.

The FRC recommend enforcement by match officials of Rule 1.4 (a), that is “When a player is in possession of the ball, it may be: (a) carried for a maximum of four steps or held in the hand(s) for no longer than the time needed to take four steps”.

RECOMMENDATION #2: GAME INTELLIGENCE UNIT

The Association has been gathering data over the past 15 + years on trends in our game. However, this has largely been periodic either mid or end of season. It is the view of the FRC that a Game Intelligence Unit should be established overseen by two panels of experts who sit under the Standing Committee on Playing Rules.

The unit shall have responsibility for analysing all inter county senior games on a weekly basis during the season to ensure rules are being applied and also identifying new trends in the game that may or may not benefit it as a spectacle.

The capacity to analyse our games and produce related material also promotes the prospect of sharing data to enhance coach development programmes, coaching practice both internally and internationally externally. Moreover, it also supports our ability to live our mission for the game in that the Association would have ability to use images and data to help promote the uniqueness of what are incredibly skilful games to young and old audiences thus creating a hook to engage digitally beyond the stadium experience.

The FRC recommends the establishment of Game Intelligence Unit with responsibility for analysing all games on a weekly basis during the season to ensure rules are being applied and also identifying new trends in the game that may or may not benefit it as a spectacle.

RECOMMENDATION #3: UNDERAGE PLAYING RULES - FLEXIBILITY

A core aim of the Association is to grow and retain as many players as possible in the best environment possible. We know in the youth space especially drop off is a major issue. We also know through introduction of adapted rules the playing experience can be enhanced to the extent it promotes player retention, progression and skill development.

Currently our rules permit a County subject to bye-law to amend specific playing rules. We recommend that this flexibility should be extended whereby the organising body shall subject to the approval of Central Council, make amendments to playing rules for leagues and championships up to and including Under 18. We therefore propose the following motion be adopted at Special Congress for inclusion as a 'Code':

The FRC recommends a county shall, subject to the approval of Central Council make amendments to playing rules for leagues and championships up to and including Under 18 to suit its requirements to promote participation, retention, skill development and improve the overall playing experience.



RECOMMENDATION #4: INTER-CHANGE

The duration and pace of games is such that fatigue has become a principal factor in the incidence of injury. We are of the view that pace and possible distance covered in the game under the proposed enhancement will increase. In this regard we are proposing the introduction of an inter-change substitution format. This format has worked successfully in the past during the International Rules Series with Australia.

A team shall be permitted to use a total of 21 players. A team shall be permitted to make a set number of inter-changes per half and an unlimited number at half-time in normal and extra time.

Central Council shall have the authority to determine the number of inter-change substitutions per half and the set down protocols for its implementation.

The inter-change shall take place at a specific area of the field. The penalty for not following protocol shall be a Cat II Infraction i.e. Black card.

The FRC recommends the introduction of an inter-change substitution format with Central Council having authority to determine procedures and protocols for its use.

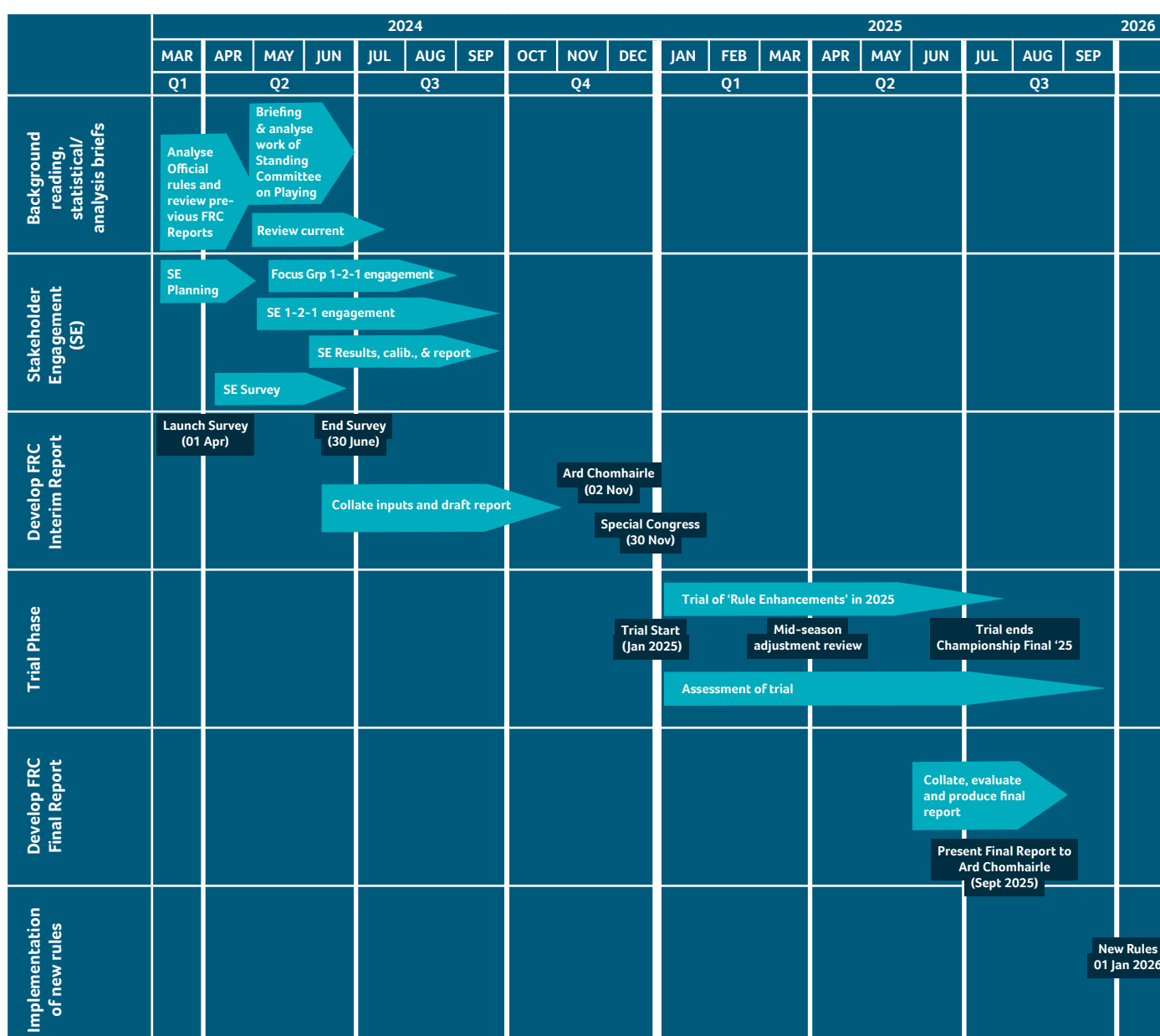




APPENDICES

Appendix (i) Project Charter and Summary Plan of Action

Football Review Committee 2024/2025 - Project on one page





Appendix (ii) Report on Public Survey and Correspondence received – Quantitative and Qualitative analysis

The Football Review Committee State of the Game Study 2024
Dr Michael McKay (Northern Ireland Public Health Research Network, Ulster University)
Dr Peter Horgan (GAA)
Dr Paul Donnelly (Ulster University)
Miss Catherine McKay (Belfast Metropolitan College)

FOREWORD

What follows is an attempt to synthesise and report on a very large amount of material, on an area that many participants feel passionately about. During the production of the report, the authors debated how much actual material should or reasonably could be included. In the end, we opted for a broader exposé of the submissions, rather than an over-synthesised or distilled version.

In the quantitative section (where participants had to choose between response options) we have included all results, for completeness and transparency. Sometimes the results reveal very little by way of between-groups differences, but that in itself is a finding. In the qualitative section (where participants were able to submit open text material), we have attempted to include as many direct quotes as possible to substantiate the synthesised theme. We are also aware that there will be overlap between extracted themes, however, these were the themes that emerged at a macro level, and the reader can synthesise the totality of the material for his/herself.

This work was undertaken at arm's length from the Football Review Committee members. Once completed, the material was presented to the committee (September 2024). As an authorship group, we sincerely hope that we have done justice to the submitted material, and that readers find the report to be both transparent and clear. The authors do not support or endorse any point of view within this report and have attempted to report the findings with objectivity. All direct quotations used are illustrative.

A game that gives opportunity for expression of creative technical and movement skills at speed (including tackling). The speed of the game is important, and I feel that when our game is played at speed it is an exciting product. Slow, possession-based football can be difficult to watch. The challenge for the FRC, in my opinion, is to look at the parameters of our game that promotes slow play and seek to adjust those parameters!

Male, 31-45, Monaghan (Coach/Manager)

The tackle is the biggest issue. No clearly defined tackle and every referee interpreting it differently. Near hand tackle is not a skill but merely a grabbing of the opponent's arm. Attacking players grabbing a defending player to try and gain a free is another problem. Defender has no chance when referees don't implement steps or throw hand pass rule. Only solution is Australian rules type tackle where player with ball must get rid of it and game continues to flow.

Male, 46-60, Kildare (Supporter)

Deep lying defence, lateral passing. Personally, losing interest in watching most games each year. In my opinion, defensive systems are creating closer contests with the last 10 minutes being when a game springs to life, can skip most games to that point.

Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Player)

Given my age, my playing days belonged to the older style traditional type of game. Even though I am not connected in any way to Kerry I loved the manner in how the Kerry team of 70's and 80's played the game at the time. However, when I review those games, I see the lack of thought given to many aspects of the spectacle. I understand why modern-day teams play like they do. However, I would like to see the best of the traditional game married to the more strategic type of modern game. This would mean more kicking, less hand passing, not allowing attacking team pass back into their own half (once half line has been crossed), possibly increasing the value of a kicked point outside a certain distance (similar to basketball 3 pointer).

Male, 61+, Offaly (Administrator)



"Firstly, we as an Association need to decide what sort of game we want i.e. what philosophy is behind our game so that it will form a basis for the rules of the game. Do we want a game based on possession e.g. soccer or a game where possession is contested (Original intention of the game) e.g. rugby. Most people want the latter and a new tackle is needed to incentivise this. Also, can the hand pass be replaced by a fist pass as a high percentage of them are dubious. Rule 6.4 bringing the ball forward 13m when showing dissent with the Referee's decision is no deterrent. Needs to be at least 40m. Zero tolerance.

Male, 46-60, Leitrim (Referee)

I would love to see traditional type football. I know it's not as easy with tactics so advanced now but the idea of 15 v 15, man for man is what I love. Players in their positions of the field. Fighting for every ball. An attacking game with an emphasis on kicking. Far too much of games now played through the hands. I'd sooner see a kick turned over than turning around and giving a short handpass like in possession-based play.

Male, 31-45, Offaly (Supporter)

In short, I would prefer to watch a game that rewards skill and creativity. I think it adds to the excitement. More needs to be made of skills and a bigger emphasis needs to be put on punishing cynical play. For me the black card needs to be amended to denial of a scoring opportunity and referees are allowed police that with some latitude. Too often I would referee a game where a player is pulled back to deny a scoring chance. Technically it isn't a black card but absolutely has the same impact as a pull down. I also think a trial of 13 a side is worth a go too. It would create space on the field and given the fitness of players now I think it would work. It would also be good down to smaller club grades too as numbers can be an issue and games in some leagues can be played down to 11 a side already. There also needs to be a uniformity in how underage games are played. Some counties play things like 2 touch others play all in, let underage players develop skills in a full setting, but with smaller goals, from 12 on.

Male, 31-45, Meath (Referee)

Gaelic Football is dying on its feet. It has morphed into a bastardized hybrid of Gaelic/Rugby/Soccer. The traditional skills (catching, kicking, blocking etc.) associated with the game have become diluted if not extinct. The handpass is not a skill, it's about as skilful as blinking! Frees taken out of the hand, ditto and this is also compounded by players constantly cheating by stealing yards to make it easier. The Mark is a joke, catching a ball at waist height and calling a Mark is an insult to any GAA supporter. How many steps are allowed in soloing? Is it 4, 5, 6, 10 or 20? It varies according to the whim of the referee! Jersey pulling is rife and is seldom punished. A cursory glance at attendance figures show that former supporters are staying away in their droves. Who wants to watch 30 adults playing "ring a ring a rosie football" (i.e. going around in circles)? I'm sorry to say about a sport that was once a pillar of Irish culture.

Male, 61+, Clare (Supporter)



AIMS OF THIS STUDY

This report aligns with the strategic direction of the GAA to establish a research framework. It is also consistent with recent sport national development policy which identifies that there is a lack of evidence to inform practice, and further that improved research, evaluation, and information systems will foster better evidence-based decision making throughout sport. Accordingly, sport and physical activity programmes will be able to serve as interventions to promote healthy behaviours and physically active lifestyles for individuals and communities (Sport Ireland, National Sports Policy, 2018 – 2027).

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This report is a summary of the responses to an online survey designed by the Football Review Committee (FRC; Spring and Summer 2024). The aim of the FRC has been to assess opinion, and develop plans and proposals with a view to ensuring that:

"Gaelic Games will be the most enjoyable amateur games in the world, to play and watch."

The terms of reference of the committee are set out previously in this document. The terms of reference for the authors of this report were:

- To analyse and report findings from the quantitative data responses (questions with predesigned and limited response options).
- To analyse and report findings from the qualitative data (open text submissions, where participants were permitted up to 100 words of text).
- To present these results in a clear, logical, and meaningful way.

METHOD

A bespoke online questionnaire was designed. The survey was open for the period April 5th – 1st July 2024. Stakeholders from across Gaelic football at all levels of participation were invited to complete the survey. The survey was circulated through:

- Direct email to club secretaries in the Association
- Direct email to all Games Development Personnel, and Coach Developers in each Association

In addition, a promotional campaign was designed with members of the GAA Communications department including:

- GAA website
- Print and digital media via press launch
- Social media

SURVEY QUESTIONS

In terms of demographic information, participants were asked to indicate their gender, membership of the GAA (yes/no), which county or overseas region they were associated with, their age (banded as under 17; 17 to 20; 21 to 30; 31 to 45; 46 to 60; and 61+), and the role which best describes them with regards to the GAA (player; coach/manager; referee; administrator; or supporter).

In addition to this information, participants were asked to rate senior inter-county football, underage inter-county football, senior club football, and underage club football (very poor through very good).

Participants were asked to rank (1 to 10) ten technical, and ten tactical skills in accordance to how much they liked them. In addition, participants were asked to comment on how much they liked or disliked (strongly like; like, dislike; strongly dislike) ten areas of the game (for example, cynical fouling, continuous use of the hand pass etc.). Finally, participants were given up to 100 words of free text to comment on what kind of game 'they would like to see'. Responses were given via Microsoft Forms, and data were exported to Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and/or SPSS for analysis and reporting.

There were over 7,000 responses to the online survey, and more than 5,000 of these included open text responses. The report is divided into two sections, to represent the quantitative and qualitative elements.

DATA ANALYSIS

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data were imported to SPSS, cleaned, and coded for analyses. Simple crosstabulations were computed, and results for tests of association were reported (along with effect size estimates). Cross-tabulations were produced, with accompanying statistics (Chi2) indicating the degree of association between groups/variables. The magnitude (or meaningfulness) of these associations was interpreted using the Cramer's V statistic. Here, 0 indicates no association between variables, and 1 indicates perfect association.

For analyses additional to those directly permitted by the raw data, participants were re-coded on two levels, firstly the province which they reported to be from (based on responses to county of association), and whether their county participated in the 2024 Tailteann Cup, or Sam Maguire Cup competitions. This was to enable the assessment of provincial differences (if any), and to be able to examine differences in responses based on the participation level of their county at the time of responding. Accordingly, all quantitative data were analysed on five levels:

- Province,
- Gender,
- Inter-county participation level (2024),
- Role within the GAA, and
- Age (all self-reported).

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The multitude of open text submitted material was thematically synthesized. Firstly, all submissions were allocated a 'macro' level thematic code, for example, 'tackling', or 'limit zones'. This was done by two of the authors (MMK and CMK). These codes morphed slightly as the process developed, for example, the thematic code 'attacking' began as 'forward play', but with time and scrutiny, it became more obvious that attacking was a more appropriate thematic title. Or again, 'leave the game alone' became 'leave alone, or only minor changes', with increased scrutiny. The allocation of a broad thematic code was done when it was clear that the overall focus or point being made was about one main issue, for example, 'the tackle needs to be defined' would have been allocated the 'tackling' thematic code. A submission saying something like 'the tackle is a mess, and it needs to be clearer... we also need to look at handpassing', would also have been allocated to the tackling macro theme, with cognisance taken of the secondary point being made. However, there were many submissions which listed a menu of issues, with no obvious major one. These were allocated to a theme called 'a broad view', and data from these was included in the thematic analysis of the relevant themes. For example, a submission may have read '1. The mark; 2. The tackle; 3. Only allow 6 players up; 4. Refereeing is terrible'. Here it was impossible to allocate that to a specific macro theme, but the relevant information was taken account of in the themes (respectively) the mark, tackling, limiting play(ers), and officiating.

The process described above was a success, insofar as it resulted in the clustering of (at times almost verbatim) very similarly worded submissions. This allowed for a synthesizing of material, and the extraction of sub-themes. For example, within the theme of tackling, it was clear that sub-themes included things like cynical fouling, the need to clearly define the tackle, and so on. In order to substantiate the synthesized material, direct quotations are included below. These were chosen 'blind' to the participant. In other words, the quotations were included throughout the synthesising process, and only after the section was written and edited, was the identifying information sought and included. Therefore, there was no attempt made to 'steer' the age, gender, location, or role of participants whose submissions were used to substantiate the validity of the sub themes. Each of the themes extracted or identified, is described in Section Two of this report. These are presented in theme alphabetical order. The quotations used in Section Two are included largely as they were submitted, with minor punctuation edits in places.

KEY FINDINGS

- A bespoke online survey was designed, and made available for completion by members of the public in Spring/Summer 2024.
- The survey was made up of quantitative measures (with defined response options such as 'strongly agree', or 'strongly disagree'), and included the option for participants to submit up to 100 words of free text (qualitative dimension).
- The survey asked participants to rate four areas of Gaelic football (senior inter-county football, club football, underage inter-county football, and underage club football). Additionally, participants were asked for their views on ten aspects of contemporary Gaelic football, ten technical skills, and ten tactical skills.
- A total of 7,395 responses were received from across the island of Ireland, and beyond. In terms of the demographic profile of participants, a large majority were male, current members of the GAA, and from counties which had or were participating in the Sam Maguire Cup in 2024 (as opposed to the Tailteann Cup). There was a disproportionately high proportion of responses from coaches or managers, and more than two-thirds of the sample were aged 31 to 60 years old.
- Of note, and in the case of all four areas of football, a majority of participants (> 50%) reported football to be good, or very good.
- Responses to the rating items suggested that there was very little variation in response profiles when comparing participants from Tailteann Cup-playing counties and Sam Maguire-playing counties. Greater proportions of females rated football more favourably across the four domains than males, and greater proportions of players rated the game more favourably than all other roles within the GAA (supporter, coach/manager, referee, or administrator). There was an effect for age such that with increasing age, participants appeared to be less satisfied with the game. Finally, there was something of a Munster/Ulster effect, where a greater proportion of participants from Ulster believed football to be either good or very good, with the reverse true in Munster.
- The above pattern was particularly true for responses relating to senior inter-county and club, with a narrowing of the (still evident) effect concerning questions relating to underage inter-county and club football.
- In terms of the ten aspects of Gaelic football, there was widespread dislike of aspects such as cynical fouling, or disrespect for referees. Participants appeared more tolerant of 'continuous use of the hand pass', and 'group (or swarm) tackling'. In terms of continuous use of the hand pass, participants from Ulster and beyond the island of Ireland were most tolerant, and in terms of group tackling, players and coaches/managers were most tolerant.
- There was a clear age effect regarding the ten aspects of football, with dissatisfaction increasing markedly with age. There was increasing discontent with aspects such as cynical fouling, tactical fouling, continuous use of the hand pass, group tackling, and disrespect of referees. Of note, there was increasing tolerance with age for refereeing inconsistency.
- Five skills dominated the ranking of technical skills. These were kicking, catching, scoring of long-range points, general creative play, and goal scoring.
- Three skills dominated the ranking of tactical skills. These were 1 v 1 contests to gain possession of the ball, taking on an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation, and good support play during speedy attacking transitions.
- Responses to the open text submissions were allocated a 'macro' level code, for example, tackling, scoring, or limitations on play/players. Sub themes were then extracted, and supporting quotes were selected (blind to demographic details) to support these themes. The demographic details were added afterwards.
- The 'macro' level themes were as follows: Attacking play; Fast and free football; Hand passing; Kicking; Limitations on play and players; Man-on-man; Nostalgia; Officiating the game (including the penalty shoot-out); Reward skill or risk-taking; Scoring; Structures; Tackling; and the mark.
- There was also a 'macro' level theme of 'leave the game alone', with a proportion of participants believing that there was very little wrong with the game. There was also a substantial number of submissions touching on multiple themes, and the material contained therein was incorporated into the relevant theme.
- The overall sense from this survey is that large proportions of participants believe the game to be average to very good. Many called for minor tweaks or amendments to rules in order to make the game even better. There were some hostile submissions, but these were few in number.

1. THE PARTICIPANT COHORT

The participant cohort is made up of a complex mix of individuals, differing in age, gender, location, and role within Gaelic games. Table 1 outlines the details of the participants who were predominantly **male** (89.2%), and **members** of the GAA (94.4%).

In terms of location, just over one third (35.7%) were from a county in **Leinster**, with **Ulster** (27.5%), **Munster** (19.9%), and **Connacht** (13.6%) next in order. Of note, 3.3% of respondents declared that they lived **beyond the island of Ireland**. Of those respondents from the island of Ireland, responses were collated as to whether the respondents' county participated in the **Sam Maguire** or **Tailteann Cup** competitions in 2024. This analysis showed a majority of respondents were from counties participating in the Sam Maguire cup competition (71.7%).

When considering age, it is noteworthy that, while there were respondents from all age categories, over two thirds of respondents were in the 31 – 60 years age cohort (67.5%). The **31 – 45** age cohort was the most prominent category (36.7%), followed by **46 – 60** (30.8%), and **21 – 30** years (15.4%). There were fewer respondents aged under 21 (3.4% under 17, and 5.5% aged between **17 and 20**). The oldest age category (**aged 61 +**) accounted for 8.2% of responses.

With regard to self-reported main role played within the Association, respondents were asked to identify the role that best describes their involvement. The most prominent response was '**Coach/Manager**' at 31.7%, followed closely by '**Player**' at 30.5%. '**Supporters**' were the next highest category (25.1%), followed by '**Administrator**' (10.5%), and '**Referee**' (2.2%). It should be noted that while many participants might have more than one role, they were asked to indicate their main role.

Table 1: Descriptive information for the survey sample (n = 7,395).

		N (%)
Provinces	Ulster	2,035 (27.5)
	Connacht	1,003 (13.6)
	Munster	1,469 (19.9)
	Leinster	2,646 (35.7)
	Beyond the island of Ireland	242 (3.3)
Gender	Male	6,590 (89.2)
	Female	787 (10.6)
	Prefer not to say	18 (0.2)
GAA member	Yes	6,984 (94.4)
	No	411 (5.6)
Age	U17	249 (3.4)
	17 to 20	410 (5.5)
	21 to 30	1,141 (15.4)
	31 to 45	2,707 (36.7)
	46 to 60	2,281 (30.8)
	61+	607 (8.2)
Playing grade	Tailteann Cup	2,024 (28.3)
	Sam Maguire Cup	5,129 (71.7)
Role within GAA	Player	2,254 (30.5)
	Coach/Manager	2,343 (31.7)
	Referee	166 (2.2)
	Administrator	777 (10.5)
	Supporter	1,855 (25.1)

2. PARTICIPANTS' RATING OF GAELIC FOOTBALL

2.1 OVERALL RATINGS

Participants were asked to rate senior inter-county football, underage inter-county football, senior club football, and underage club football individually on a scale as follows: very poor (coded as 1), poor = 2, average = 3, good = 4 and very good = 5.

Overall, n = 1,270 (17.2%) rated **senior inter-county football** as very good, n = 2,853 (38.6%) rated it as good, n = 2,128 (28.7%) rated it as average, n = 859 (11.6%) rated it as poor, and n = 285 (3.9%) rated it as very poor. In other words, **more than half** of participants rated senior inter-county football as being either good, or very good, with **more than three quarters** of participants reporting it as average or above.

In terms of **senior club football**, n = 1,122 (15.2%) rated it as very good, n = 3,121 (42.2%) rated it as good, n = 2,224 (30.1%) rated it as average, n = 746 (10.0%) rated it as poor, and n = 182 (2.5%) rated it as very poor. Overall, these results point to a general sense of football at club level being seen as average or better by the **vast majority** (87.5%) of the sample, and as good or very good by over half (57.4%) of participants.

In terms of **underage inter-county football**, n = 1,288 (17.4%) rated it as very good, n = 3,463 (46.8%) rated it as good, n = 1,951 (26.5%) rated it as average, n = 565 (7.6%) rated it as poor, and n = 128 (1.7%) rated it as very poor. Therefore, **over 90%** rated it as average or above, with **almost two thirds** of participants (64.2%) rating it as good or very good.

Finally, a similar story emerged in terms of **underage club football**, where n = 1,528 (20.7%) rated it as very good, n = 3,313 (44.8%) rated it as good, n = 1,896 (25.6%) rated it as average, n = 518 (7.0%) rated it as poor, and n = 140 (1.9%) rated it as very poor.

Each of these overall results will be included in figures further below which display fractured results, for example by province, or gender etc. The overall results will be presented in the final column in each case.

Tables 2 to 5 display the proportions of responses to each of the four questions by gender, playing grade, role in the GAA, age and province. The tables are colour-coded with darker colours indicating higher proportions of responses.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for responses to the question about rating senior inter-county football. Shown are number and proportion.

Gender	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Male	274 (4.2%)	823 (12.5%)	1967 (29.8%)	2541 (38.6%)	985 (14.8%)
Female	8 (1.0%)	35 (4.4%)	158 (20.1%)	306 (38.9%)	280 (35.6%)
Prefer not to say	3 (16.7%)	1 (5.6%)	3 (16.7%)	6 (33.3%)	5 (27.8%)
Playing Grade					
Tailteann Cup	95 (4.7%)	298 (14.7%)	614 (30.4%)	746 (36.9%)	268 (13.3%)
Sam Maguire Cup	182 (3.6%)	545 (10.7%)	1463 (28.6%)	1991 (38.9%)	935 (18.3%)
Role in GAA					
Player	66 (3.1%)	182 (8.6%)	492 (23.2%)	922 (43.4%)	462 (21.8%)
Coach/Manager	74 (3.2%)	300 (13.0%)	726 (31.6%)	892 (38.8%)	307 (13.4%)
Referee	6 (3.8%)	10 (6.4%)	53 (34.0%)	64 (41.0%)	23 (14.7%)
Administrator	30 (4.1%)	102 (13.8%)	249 (33.6%)	260 (35.1%)	99 (13.4%)
Supporter	101 (5.6%)	249 (13.7%)	557 (30.6%)	599 (32.9%)	312 (17.2%)
Age					
Under 17	3 (1.2%)	16 (6.5%)	41 (16.7%)	103 (41.9%)	83 (33.7%)
17 to 20	6 (1.5%)	43 (10.7%)	68 (16.9%)	178 (44.3%)	107 (26.6%)
21 to 30	27 (2.5%)	95 (8.9%)	263 (24.7%)	465 (43.7%)	213 (20.0%)
31 to 45	113 (4.4%)	295 (11.4%)	755 (29.1%)	1023 (39.4%)	409 (15.8%)
46 to 60	84 (3.8%)	308 (13.8%)	762 (34.1%)	783 (35.0%)	300 (13.4%)
61+	44 (7.4%)	86 (14.5%)	188 (31.6%)	185 (31.1%)	91 (15.3%)
Province					
Ulster	46 (2.3%)	137 (6.7%)	474 (23.3%)	885 (43.5%)	492 (24.2%)
Connacht	36 (3.6%)	111 (11.1%)	321 (32.1%)	389 (38.9%)	143 (14.3%)
Munster	98 (6.7%)	256 (17.5%)	537 (36.6%)	445 (30.4%)	130 (8.9%)
Leinster	97 (3.7%)	339 (12.9%)	745 (28.3%)	1018 (38.6%)	438 (16.6%)
Beyond Ireland	6 (2.5%)	15 (6.2%)	48 (19.8%)	111 (45.9%)	62 (25.6%)

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for responses to the question about rating senior club football. Shown are number and proportion.

Gender	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Male	171 (2.6%)	717 (10.9%)	2059 (31.2%)	2742 (41.6%)	901 (13.7%)
Female	9 (1.1%)	27 (3.4%)	160 (20.3%)	372 (47.3%)	219 (27.8%)
Prefer not to say	2 (11.1%)	2 (11.1%)	5 (27.8%)	7 (38.9%)	2 (11.1%)
Playing Grade					
Tailteann Cup	70 (3.5%)	255 (12.6%)	645 (31.9%)	803 (39.7%)	248 (12.3%)
Sam Maguire Cup	107 (2.1%)	482 (9.4%)	1515 (29.6%)	2199 (43.0%)	813 (15.9%)
Role in GAA					
Player	41 (1.8%)	151 (6.7%)	573 (25.4%)	1023 (45.4%)	466 (20.7%)
Coach/Manager	62 (2.6%)	268 (11.4%)	762 (32.5%)	988 (42.2%)	263 (11.2%)
Referee	3 (1.8%)	18 (10.8%)	52 (31.3%)	64 (38.6%)	29 (17.5%)
Administrator	18 (2.3%)	88 (11.3%)	259 (33.3%)	314 (40.4%)	98 (12.6%)
Supporter	58 (3.1%)	221 (11.9%)	578 (31.2%)	732 (39.5%)	266 (14.3%)
Age					
Under 17	1 (0.4%)	9 (3.6%)	53 (21.3%)	119 (47.8%)	67 (26.9%)
17 to 20	3 (0.7%)	24 (5.9%)	102 (24.9%)	184 (44.9%)	97 (23.7%)
21 to 30	25 (2.2%)	79 (6.9%)	274 (24.0%)	539 (47.2%)	224 (19.6%)
31 to 45	70 (2.6%)	274 (10.1%)	859 (31.7%)	1134 (41.9%)	370 (13.7%)
46 to 60	65 (2.8%)	284 (12.5%)	723 (31.7%)	922 (40.4%)	287 (12.6%)
61+	18 (3.0%)	76 (12.5%)	213 (35.1%)	223 (36.7%)	77 (12.7%)
Province					
Ulster	46 (2.3%)	137 (6.7%)	474 (23.3%)	885 (43.5)	492 (24.2%)
Connacht	36 (3.6%)	111 (11.1%)	321 (32.1%)	389 (38.9%)	143 (14.3%)
Munster	98 (6.7%)	256 (17.5%)	537 (36.6%)	445 (30.4%)	130 (8.9%)
Leinster	97 (3.7%)	339 (12.9%)	745 (28.3%)	1018 (38.6%)	438 (16.6%)
Beyond Ireland	6 (2.5%)	15 (6.2%)	48 (19.8%)	111 (45.9%)	62 (25.6%)

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for responses to the question about rating underage inter-county football. Shown are number and proportion

Gender	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Male	116 (1.8%)	502 (7.6%)	1779 (27.0%)	3097 (47.0%)	1096 (16.6%)
Female	12 (1.5%)	60 (7.6%)	170 (21.6%)	356 (45.2%)	189 (24.0%)
Prefer not to say	0	3 (16.7%)	2 (11.1%)	10 (55.6%)	3 (16.7%)
Playing Grade					
Tailteann Cup	51 (2.5%)	207 (10.2%)	565 (28.0%)	873 (43.2%)	325 (16.1%)
Sam Maguire Cup	71 (1.4%)	342 (6.7%)	1336 (26.1%)	2469 (48.3%)	898 (17.6%)
Role in GAA					
Player	45 (2.0%)	181 (8.0%)	539 (23.9%)	1052 (46.7%)	437 (19.4%)
Coach/Manager	40 (1.7%)	183 (7.8%)	652 (27.8%)	1089 (46.5%)	379 (16.2%)
Referee	2 (1.2%)	9 (5.4%)	58 (34.9%)	69 (38.6%)	28 (16.9%)
Administrator	7 (0.9%)	65 (8.4%)	224 (28.8%)	373 (48.0%)	108 (13.9%)
Supporter	34 (1.8%)	127 (6.8%)	478 (25.8%)	880 (47.4%)	336 (18.1%)
Age					
Under 17	5 (2.0%)	18 (7.2%)	59 (23.7%)	95 (38.2%)	72 (28.9%)
17 to 20	11 (2.7%)	52 (12.7%)	101 (24.6%)	166 (40.5%)	80 (19.5%)
21 to 30	23 (2.0%)	76 (6.7%)	274 (24.0%)	560 (49.1%)	208 (18.2%)
31 to 45	45 (1.7%)	205 (7.6%)	716 (26.4%)	1275 (47.1%)	466 (17.2%)
46 to 60	33 (1.4%)	182 (8.0%)	653 (28.6%)	1058 (46.4%)	355 (15.6%)
61+	11 (1.8%)	32 (5.3%)	148 (24.4%)	309 (50.9%)	107 (17.6%)
Province					
Ulster	36 (1.8%)	163 (8.0%)	531 (26.1%)	938 (46.1%)	367 (18.0%)
Connacht	12 (1.2%)	49 (4.9%)	211 (21.0%)	534 (53.2%)	197 (19.6%)
Munster	38 (2.6%)	148 (10.1%)	486 (33.1%)	597 (40.6%)	200 (13.6%)
Leinster	36 (1.4%)	192 (7.3%)	675 (25.5%)	1281 (48.4%)	462 (17.5%)
Beyond Ireland	6 (2.5%)	13 (5.4%)	48 (19.8%)	113 (46.7%)	62 (25.6%)

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for responses to the question about rating underage club football. Shown are number and proportion

Gender	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Male	124 (1.9%)	471 (7.1%)	1708 (25.9%)	2988 (45.3%)	1299 (19.7%)
Female	15 (1.9%)	44 (5.6%)	184 (23.4%)	316 (40.2%)	228 (29.0%)
Prefer not to say	1 (5.6%)	3 (16.7%)	4 (22.2%)	9 (50.0%)	1 (5.6%)
Playing Grade					
Tailteann Cup	51 (2.5%)	210 (10.4%)	572 (28.3%)	848 (42.0%)	340 (16.1%)
Sam Maguire Cup	79 (1.5%)	294 (5.7%)	1268 (24.8%)	2354 (46.0%)	1121 (21.9%)
Role in GAA					
Player	48 (2.1%)	151 (6.7%)	615 (27.3%)	994 (44.1%)	446 (19.8%)
Coach/Manager	47 (2.0%)	177 (7.6%)	552 (23.6%)	1063 (45.4%)	504 (21.5%)
Referee	2 (1.2%)	15 (9.0%)	48 (28.9%)	70 (42.2%)	31 (18.7%)
Administrator	9 (1.2%)	53 (6.8%)	206 (26.5%)	342 (44.0%)	167 (21.5%)
Supporter	34 (1.8%)	122 (6.6%)	475 (25.6%)	844 (45.5%)	380 (20.5%)
Age					
Under 17	6 (2.4%)	16 (6.4%)	61 (24.5%)	98 (39.4%)	68 (27.3%)
17 to 20	10 (2.4%)	30 (7.3%)	117 (28.5%)	166 (40.5%)	87 (21.2%)
21 to 30	27 (2.4%)	78 (6.8%)	314 (27.5%)	520 (45.6%)	202 (17.7%)
31 to 45	48 (1.8%)	210 (7.8%)	696 (25.7%)	1202 (44.4%)	551 (20.4%)
46 to 60	34 (1.5%)	152 (6.7%)	551 (24.2%)	1045 (45.8%)	499 (21.9%)
61+	15 (2.5%)	32 (5.3%)	157 (25.9%)	282 (46.5%)	121 (19.9%)
Province					
Ulster	27 (1.3%)	125 (6.1%)	522 (25.7%)	903 (44.4%)	458 (22.5%)
Connacht	11 (1.1%)	61 (6.1%)	226 (22.5%)	501 (50.0%)	204 (20.3%)
Munster	45 (3.1%)	132 (9.0%)	409 (27.8%)	617 (42.0%)	266 (18.1%)
Leinster	48 (1.8%)	189 (7.1%)	686 (25.9%)	1189 (44.9%)	534 (20.2%)
Beyond Ireland	9 (3.7%)	11 (4.5%)	53 (21.9%)	103 (42.6%)	66 (27.3%)

Statistical analyses were conducted to examine what factors (if any) were significantly related to responses to the four rating questions. Because of the complex nature of the data the following recoding was undertaken to simplify the statistical modelling and interpretation: Age was recoded into three categories: 'up to 30', '31 to 60', and '61+'; and Role was recoded into three categories: 'player/coach/manager', 'referee or administrator', and 'supporter'. In order that they would not skew the results, the relatively small groupings of 'prefer not to say' in gender, and 'beyond the island of Ireland' in provinces, were omitted. In each analysis, one of the response categories acted as the 'reference group' and by default this was always the last category (based on the software used).

Compared to those indicating that **senior inter-county football** was very poor or poor, those indicating that they believed it to be good or very good were significantly more likely to be:

- Female (compared to Male; $p < .001$).
- From Sam Maguire Cup-playing counties (compared to Tailteann Cup; $p < .001$).
- Players/Coaches/Managers ($p < .001$) and referees/administrators ($p = .002$), compared to supporters.
- To be from Ulster ($p < .001$), and less likely to be from Munster ($p < .001$), with Leinster as the reference category.
- More likely to be younger, aged < 30 years old ($p < .001$), and aged 31 to 60 ($p = .016$), compared to 61+ years old.

Table 3 displays the results by all five categories for responses to the question about **senior club football**. Compared to those indicating that senior club football was very poor or poor, those indicating that they believed it to be good or very good were significantly more likely to be:

- Female (compared to Male; $p < .001$).
- From Sam Maguire Cup-playing counties (compared to Tailteann Cup; $p < .001$).
- Players/coaches/managers ($p < .001$) and referees/administrators ($p = .051$), compared to supporters.
- More likely to be aged < 30 years old ($p < .001$), than to be 61+ years.
- They were also less likely to be from Munster ($p < .001$), with Leinster the reference province.

Table 4 displays the results by all five categories for responses to the question about underage inter-county football. Compared to those indicating that underage inter-county football was very poor or poor, those indicating that they believed it to be good or very good were significantly more likely to be:

- From Sam Maguire Cup-playing counties (compared to Tailteann Cup; $p < .001$).
- They were also less likely to be from Munster ($p < .001$), and Ulster ($p = .002$), compared to the reference province, Leinster.

In other words, the previously observed significant findings for gender, role within the GAA, and age (seen in the models examining adult football), were not observed when analysing views on underage inter-county football.

Table 5 displays the results by all five categories for responses to the question about **underage club football**. Compared to those indicating that underage club football was very poor or poor, those indicating that they believed it to be good or very good were significantly more likely to be:

- From Sam Maguire Cup-playing counties (compared to Tailteann Cup; $p < .001$).
- They were also less likely to be from Munster ($p < .001$), compared to the reference province, Leinster.

As was the case with underage inter-county the previously observed significant findings for gender, role within the GAA, and age (seen in the models examining adult football), were not observed when analysing views on underage club football.

In summary... Looking at Tables 2 to 5 shows that the deepest colours (therefore the highest proportions of responses) were to be seen around good and average, and in very good category in some cases. In other words, large proportions of participants rated Gaelic football highly. Taking Table 2 (senior inter-county football) as an example, the last two columns (good, or very good) account for more than half of the relevant sample, in all cases. The results of the statistical tests (regression models) point to a difference in the perceptions about adult and underage games.

Given the results displayed in Tables 2 to 5, and the divergent results of the regression analyses, the next section will examine differences in response options by province, gender, playing grade, role within the GAA, and age, in greater detail.

2.2 IMPACT OF PROVINCE

Figure 1 displays the results of the ratings of each of the four playing contexts at a provincial level. Figure 1a displays the proportions of participants (overall and by province) rating senior inter-county football very poor, through very good. For the purposes of interpretation, focus will be on proportions reporting football to be very good, or good. The reader can interpret the totality of the findings for him/herself.

Senior inter-county football

There was variation in these responses across provinces so that for example, while over two-thirds (67.7%) of participants from Ulster rated it as either good or very good, this proportion doing so in Munster was only 39.2% (Figure 1a). There were also clear differences in the proportions rating football exclusively as very good, with, for example, almost three times the proportion doing so in Ulster as did so in Munster (24.2% versus 8.8%). In terms of statistical tests, results showed a significant difference in response distribution across provinces ($\chi^2 = 378.80$, $df16$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .11$). This means that the differences in ratings across provinces were statistically significant, albeit with a modest effect size.

Senior club football

As can be seen in Figure 1b, overall, 57.4% of participants reported football at club level to be good or very good. In terms of provincial differences, (as an example) between 56.9% and 71.1% of participants from Ulster, Connacht, Leinster, and beyond the island of Ireland believed it to be good or very good, with only 45.6% of those from Munster reporting it to be so. As previously, focusing only on the responses endorsing very good, shows marked differences across provinces (for example 9% in Munster, 17.9% in Ulster, and 25.5% of responses from beyond the island of Ireland). In terms of statistical tests, results showed a significant difference in response distribution across provinces ($\chi^2 = 174.83$, $df16$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .08$), again indicating a statistically significant difference, but with a modest effect size.

Figure 1. Responses to the rating of Gaelic football, by province (shown is %)

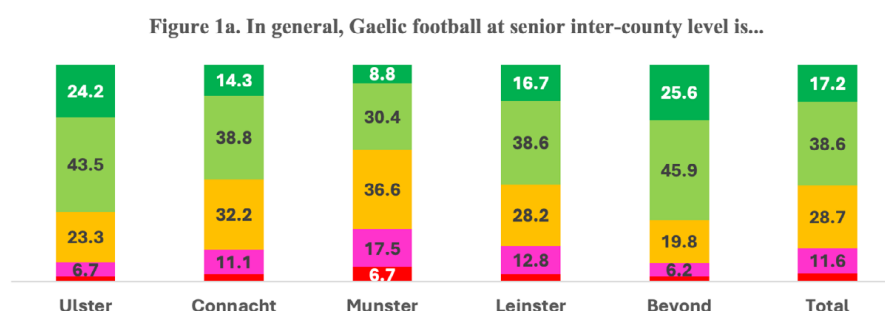


Figure 1b. In general, Gaelic football at club level is...

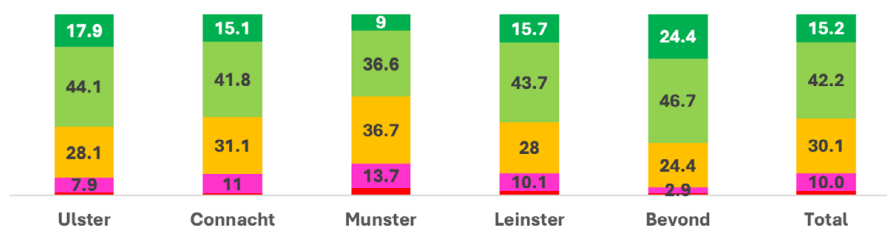


Figure 1c. In general, Gaelic football at underage inter-county is...

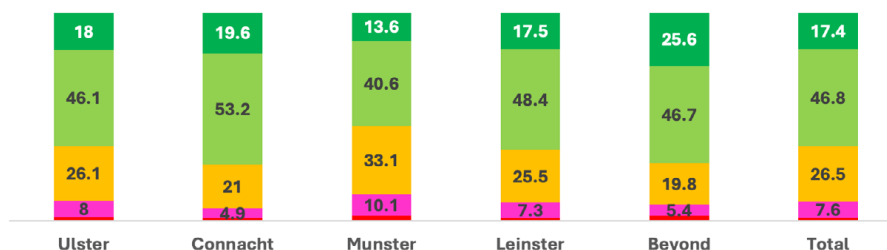
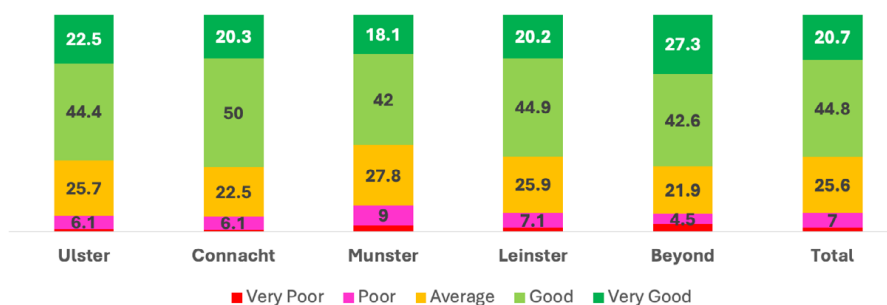


Figure 1d. In general, Gaelic football at underage club level is...



Underage inter-county football

As can be seen in Figure 1c, overall, 64.2% of participants reported underage inter-county football to be good or very good. In terms of provincial differences, (as an example) highest proportions reporting it to be good or very good were from Connacht, and from beyond the island of Ireland, with the lowest proportion reporting it as good or very good being from Munster. On this occasion the differences in terms of very good were less pronounced with a low (on the island of Ireland) of 13.6% in Munster, and a high of 19.6% in Connacht (and 25.6% in responses from beyond the island of Ireland). In terms of statistical tests, results showed a significant difference on response distribution across provinces ($\chi^2 = 122.58$, $df16$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .06$), again, with a modest effect size.

Underage club football

As can be seen in Figure 1d, 65.5% of participants reported underage club football to be good or very good. In terms of provincial differences, (as an example) highest proportions reporting it to be good or very good were from Connacht, and from beyond the island of Ireland, with the lowest proportion reporting it as good or very good being from Munster. Regarding the proportion reporting football to be very good, between-province differences were less pronounced with a low (on the island of Ireland) of 18.1% in Munster, and a high of 22.5% in Ulster (and 27.3% in responses from beyond the island of Ireland). In terms of statistical tests, results showed a significant difference on response distribution across provinces ($\chi^2 = 65.84$, $df16$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .05$), with a modest effect size.

In summary... There seems to be what might be described as a Munster/Ulster effect in these responses so that, in all cases, a greater proportion of participants (than the overall proportion) from Ulster were more positive about the state of football, whereas a lower proportion from Munster (than the overall average) rated football in all four contexts as being either good or very good.

2.3 IMPACT OF GENDER

Comparisons are reported below between those who self-reported as male (n = 6,590, 89.3%), or female (n = 787, 10.7%). The 18 participants who 'preferred not to say' were not included in the following analyses.

Figure 2a. In general, Gaelic football at senior inter-county level is...

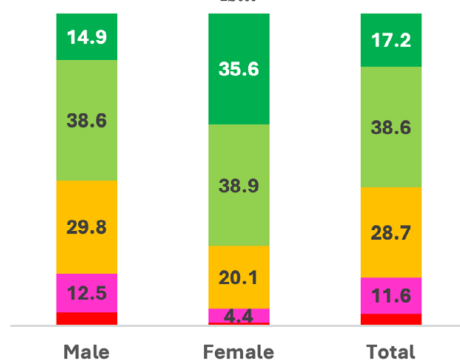


Figure 2b. In general, Gaelic football as a sport at club level is...



Figure 2c. In general, Gaelic football at underage inter-county level is...

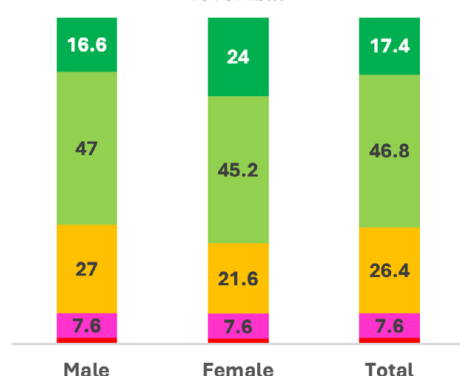


Figure 2d. In general, Gaelic football at underage club level is...

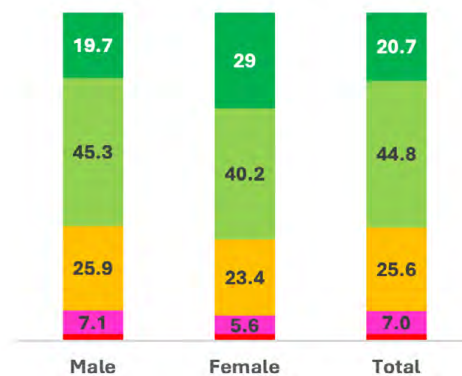


Figure 2. Responses to the rating of Gaelic football, by gender (shown is %)

Figure 2a shows that a larger proportion of females (74.5%) believed senior inter-county football to be good or very good, than males (53.5%), with more than twice the proportion of females (35.6%) rating it as very good, compared to males (14.9%). The overall statistical results for this comparison were as follows: $\chi^2 = 255.07$, df_4 , $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .19$.

A similar profile of results was observed (Figure 2b) for responses concerning football at club level where a higher proportion of females than males (75.1% versus 55.3%) reported football to be good or very good, and again more than twice the proportion of females rated it as very good, compared to males. In terms of statistics, these were as follows: $\chi^2 = 170.71$, df_4 , $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .15$. Figure 2c indicates the results for underage inter-county football. In this instance the gender difference was not so pronounced with 63.6% of males rating it as good or very good, compared to 69.2% of females, although the overall differences for this response were still statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 30.44$, df_4 , $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .06$), albeit with a modest effect size. Results also show a narrowing in the difference reporting it as very good, compared to the responses for adult games. Finally, Figure 2d displays the results for underage football at club level. Here, as immediately above, the gender difference was not as pronounced as it was regarding adult-level games, with 65% of males rating it as good or very good, compared to 69.2% of females ($\chi^2 = 37.55$, df_4 , $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .07$).

In summary... larger proportions of females believed senior inter-county and club football to be good or very good, and this difference narrowed somewhat in the responses concerning underage inter-county and club football.

2.4 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL OF COUNTIES – SAM MAGUIRE VS TAILTEANN CUP

Results are presented below (Figure 3) based on responses from participants in counties playing either in the Tailteann Cup or the Sam Maguire Cup competition (in 2024). While all results were statistically significant, the degree of that difference (the statistical effect size) was small in each case. This means that, in practical terms, participation in the different competitions was relatively unimportant in the responses to these questions.

Figure 3a displays the results comparing responses to the question about senior inter-county football. A slightly higher proportion (57.2% versus 50.2%) of those in Sam Maguire counties reported the game to be either good, or very good, with a small difference for responses exclusive to very good in favour of Sam Maguire-playing counties (13.2% versus 18.3%). In terms of statistical differences, there was a statistically significant difference, but with a modest effect size ($\chi^2 = 50.75$, $df4$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .08$).



Figure 3. Responses to the rating of Gaelic football, by playing grade (shown is %)

Figure 3b shows that there was also a slightly higher proportion of those in Sam Maguire-playing counties who believed that current senior club football was either good or very good, compared to Tailteann Cup counties (here, the difference for the very good responses was not as wide as for inter-county football). While the difference was statistically significant, the effect size was modest ($\chi^2 = 44.93$, $df4$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .08$). Figure 3c shows that a slightly higher proportion of participants from Sam Maguire-playing counties (65.8% versus 59.2%) believed football at underage inter-county level was good or very good, compared to those from Tailteann Cup-playing counties (with similar proportions in each category reporting it to be very good). There was a statistically significant difference in these results, but with a modest effect size ($\chi^2 = 47.71$, $df4$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .08$).

Finally, as displayed in Figure 3d, there was also a slightly higher proportion from Sam Maguire-playing counties who reported underage club football to be good or very good (67.9% versus 59.9%), compared to those from Tailteann Cup-playing counties. Here, there was a slightly higher proportion from Sam Maguire-playing counties who reported it to be very good (16.8% versus 21.9%). The difference was statistically significant, with a small effect size ($\chi^2 = 83.50$, $df4$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .11$).

In summary... There were small-sized differences in the proportions from Tailteann Cup-playing and Sam Maguire Cup-playing counties rating football as good, or very good, and in each case a slightly higher proportion of participants from Sam Maguire-playing counties did so.

2.5 IMPACT OF SELF-REPORTED ROLE WITHIN THE GAA

Responses were analysed by the self-reported main role (i.e. role that 'best describes') within the GAA. As seen in Figure 4a, the highest proportion reporting inter-county football to be good, or very good was among players (65.8%), with the lowest proportion of good or very good responses observed for administrators (49.5%). In terms of the proportion reporting it as very good, there was a low of 13.5% among coaches/managers (13.6% among administrators), and a high of 22% among players. The overall statistical test results for this analysis were as follows: $\chi^2 = 191.36$, $df16$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .08$, suggesting that while there was a statistically significant result, the effect size was modest.

The largest proportion of participants reporting senior football at club level to be either good or very good was observed among players (66.1%; Figure 4b) with the smallest proportion observed among administrators (53.0%), closely followed by coaches/managers (53.4%), supporters (53.8%), and referees (56.1%). In terms of very good only, a relatively low proportion of coaches/managers (11.2%) endorsed this, with a high of 20.7% of players doing so. The overall statistical difference was as follows: $\chi^2 = 153.19$, $df16$, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .07$.

The results for underage inter-county football were not as pronounced as those above. These are displayed in Figure 4c. The highest proportion of good, or very good responses was observed (marginally) among players (66.1%), with the lowest proportion reporting underage inter-county football to be either good or very good observed among referees (58.5%). Focusing on the responses for very good only, results showed a low of 13.9% among administrators, and a high of 19.4% among players. The overall statistics for this analysis was as follows: $\chi^2 = 36.36$, $df4$, $p = .003$; Cramer's $V = .04$, suggesting that while there was a statistically significant result, the effect size was very small.

Finally, regarding role within the GAA, Figure 4d shows the proportions reporting underage club football as very poor, through very good. Results again were not as pronounced as those for senior level, with a high of 66.9% (among coaches/managers) reporting this standard as good or very good, and a low of 60.9% (among referees) reporting it to be good or very good. Regarding responses endorsing very good only, the differences were at an overall low, with 18.7% of referees endorsing very good, and a high of 21.5% for both coaches/managers, and administrators. The overall statistical results of this analysis show that these differences were not statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 16.80$, $df16$, $p = .400$; Cramer's $V = .02$.

In summary... there was an obvious 'player effect' for the responses to senior inter-county and club games, where a larger proportion of players reported football as either good or very good, compared to all other roles. This effect disappeared in the underage comparisons.

Figure 4a. In general, Gaelic football at senior inter-county level is...

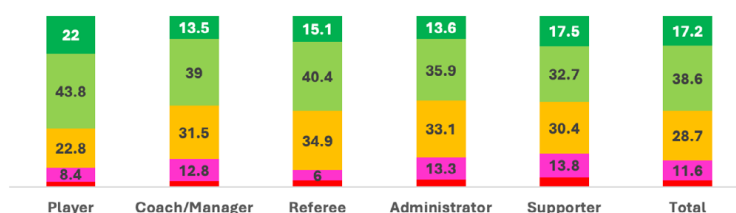


Figure 4b. In general, Gaelic football at club level is...

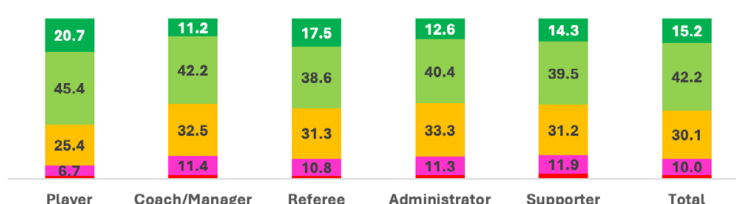


Figure 4c. In general, Gaelic football at underage inter-county level is...

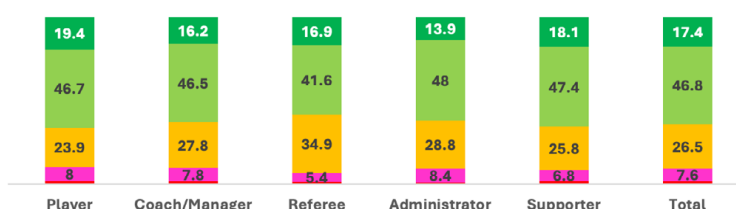


Figure 4d. In general, Gaelic football at underage club level is...

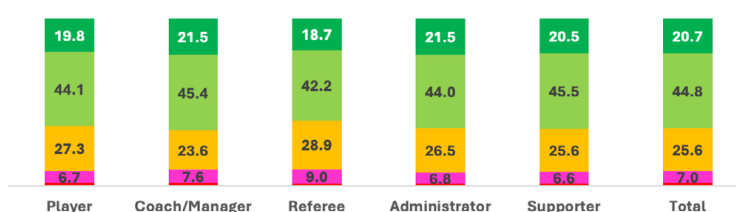


Figure 4. Responses to the rating of Gaelic football, by role in GAA (shown is %)

2.6 IMPACT OF AGE

Results were analysed by self-reported age of participants. In terms of the results for senior inter-county football, there was a clear trend upwards in dissatisfaction (see for example, the increasing height of amber colour with age band in Figure 5a), with increasing age band. As an example, while only 46.8% of those aged greater or equal to 61 years reported senior inter-county football to be good or very good, 71.2% of those aged 17 to 20 reported it to be so. The overall statistical values for this analysis pointed to a statistically significant difference in responses: Chi2 = 251.82, df20, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .09$, with a modest effect size.

A similar pattern of results was observed for senior football at club level (Figure 5b). With increasing age bands, the proportion of dissatisfaction increased, so that while 74.7% of under 17s reported it to be good or very good, this had fallen to 49.4% among those aged 61 years old or over. The overall statistical difference for this analysis was as follows: Chi2 = 179.60, df20, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .08$.

The differences across age bands for the rating of underage football at inter-county level (Figure 5c) were not so pronounced as those for adult level (Chi2 = 68.77, df20, $p < .001$; Cramer's $V = .05$), however, the trend was for dissatisfaction to increase with age. The results for underage football at club level were relatively consistent across age bands, where (in general, see Figure 5d) across ages the largest proportion of participants was represented by those reporting it as good, followed by average, followed by very good, poor, and very poor.

Statistical analysis revealed a marginally statistically significant difference across the response profiles (Chi2 = 32.60, df20, $p = .037$; Cramer's $V = .03$).

In summary... There was a very clear age-related trend in responses related to senior inter-county and club games, with dissatisfaction (by proportion) increasing with age. The effect was less pronounced in responses about underage football, and notably, the most satisfied (by proportion) group, were the underage players themselves.

Figure 5a. In general, Gaelic football at senior inter-county level is...

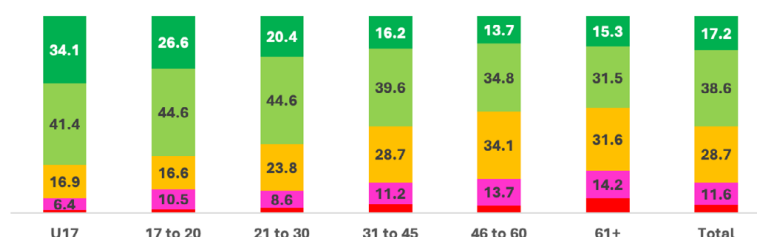


Figure 5b. In general, Gaelic football at club level is...

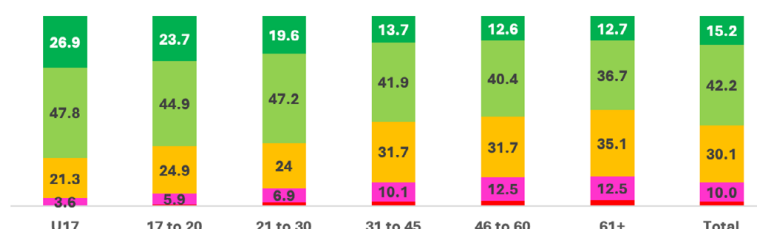


Figure 5. Responses to the rating of Gaelic football, by age (shown is %)

Figure 5c. In general, Gaelic football at underage inter-county level is...

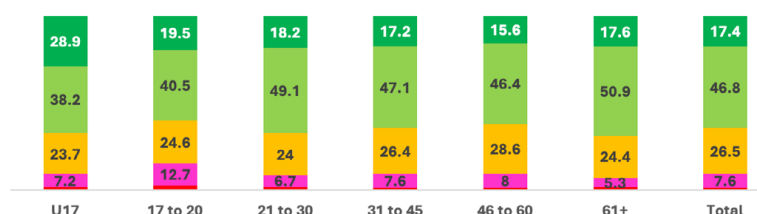
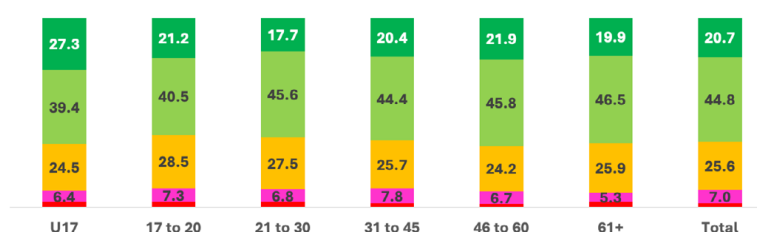


Figure 5d. In general, Gaelic football at underage club level is...



3. PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT ASPECTS OF GAELIC FOOTBALL

Participants were asked to indicate their views on **ten aspects of Gaelic football** on a four-point scale: strongly dislike, dislike, like, and strongly like. Results are presented below by province, gender, playing grade of county, role within the GAA, and age. In each case, the final column indicates the overall response rate, for comparison. In all cases, the percentage endorsing the response is displayed in the figures.

3.1 IMPACT OF PROVINCE

Figures 6 and 7 display the results by province. Specifically Figure 6a shows that overall, 88.4% of the sample reported dislike or strong dislike of **cynical fouling**, with little variation across provinces (a high in Connacht of 89.9%, and a low beyond the island of Ireland of 84.9%). In terms of strong dislike only, there was a high in Munster of 63%, and a low beyond the island of Ireland of 55%. Figure 6b shows that overall, 86.7% of participants disliked or strongly disliked **tactical fouling**. There was some provincial variation here, with a high of 89.7% in Munster, and a low of 80.2% in those from beyond the island of Ireland. In terms of strong dislike there was a high in Munster of 59.6%, and a low beyond the island of Ireland of 45.5%. As can be seen in Figure 6c there was almost universal dislike or strong dislike of **poor player skills**, with little variation across provinces. There was also very little variation in the degree of strong dislike across provinces. Results in Figure 6d show that 97.6% of participants reported either dislike or strong dislike of time wasting, again with very limited provincial variation. Notably around two thirds of participants in each province expressed strong dislike of **time wasting**. Similarly, Figure 6e shows that a very high proportion of participants (97.4%) overall reported dislike or strong dislike of **disrespect for referees**, with little provincial variation. Indeed, in all areas, more than two thirds of participants reported strong dislike of this.

Figure 7 displays the remainder of the results for aspects of Gaelic football. Results for so-called '**continuous**' use of **the handpass** showed a greater degree of variation than other issues discussed up to now (Figure 7a). Overall, 77.1% of participants expressed dislike or strong dislike for it. In addition, there was considerable provincial variation, with a high of 85.7% in Connacht for dislike or strong dislike, to a low of 65.7% in those living beyond the island of Ireland (68.2% in Ulster).



Figure 7b displays the results for **refereeing inconsistency**. Again, there was a high proportion of participants across all areas (97.1% on average) who expressed dislike or strong dislike, with little variation across provinces. There was some variation in the proportions expressing strong dislike only, with a high of 66.3% in Ulster, and a low of 53.6% in Munster.

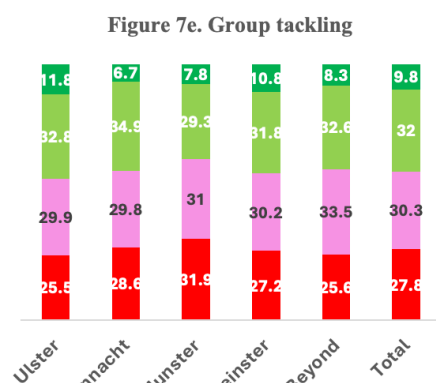
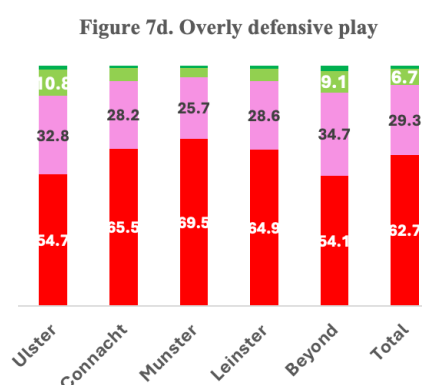
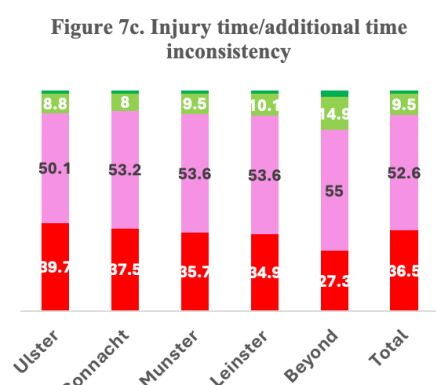
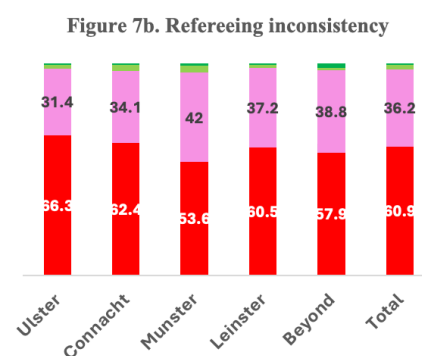
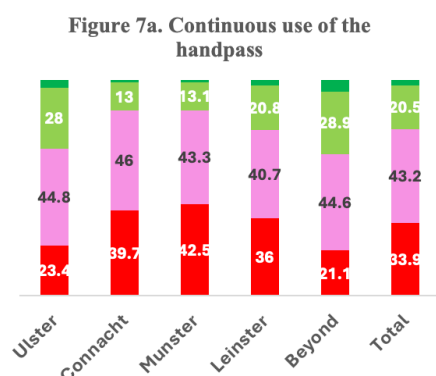


Figure 7.
Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by province (II).

Red = Strongly Dislike
Pink = Dislike
Light Green = Like
Dark Green = Strongly Like

Figure 7c shows that 89.1% of participants expressed dislike or strong dislike regarding **inconsistent injury or additional time** in games, with a high in Connacht of 90.7%, and a low in those from beyond the island of Ireland of 82.3%. There was some provincial variation in terms of proportions expressing strong dislike only, with a high in Ulster of 39.7%, and a low beyond the island of Ireland of 27.3%. Figure 7d shows that 92% of participants either disliked or strongly disliked **overly defensive play**, with a high in Munster of 95.2% and a low in Ulster of 87.5%. In terms of strong dislike only, there was considerable variation with a high in Munster of 69.5%, and a low beyond the island of Ireland of 54.1% (54.7% in Ulster). Finally, figure 7e shows that the area that was least disliked overall was that of the **group (or swarm) tackle**. Overall, 58.1% of participants either disliked or strongly disliked this, with relatively little provincial variation in proportions of responses. However, what is noteworthy is the fact that whereas elsewhere there were high proportions of participants either disliking or strongly disliking the aspect of football under consideration, here the largest proportion disliking or strongly disliking the group tackle was seen in Munster, at a relative (to responses to other items) low of 62.9%.

In summary... in all but the areas of 'continuous' use of the hand pass, and group tackling, there was almost universal dislike of the other aspects of football, and the proportions disliking or strongly disliking were relatively consistent across provinces. Response proportions for the hand passing and group tackling questions varied, both across provinces, and in terms of a more varied response profile, with relatively (compared to the other eight aspects) large proportions reporting themselves to be less disliking of these aspects of the game (visually, larger areas of green in the columns).

3.2 IMPACT OF GENDER

Figure 8 displays the results for gender. In most cases there was little variation in terms of the proportion of males or females disliking or strongly disliking the issue concerned. Some exceptions included **cynical fouling**, **tactical fouling**, **continuous use of the hand pass** (all higher in males), as well as **group (or swarm) tackling** (higher in females). The figures are presented here for reference, and transparency.

Figure 8a. Cynical fouling

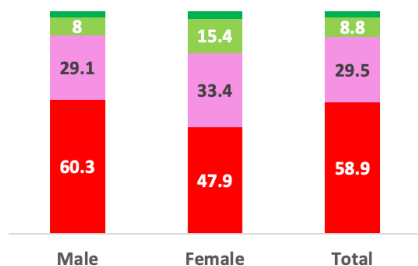


Figure 8b. Tactical fouling

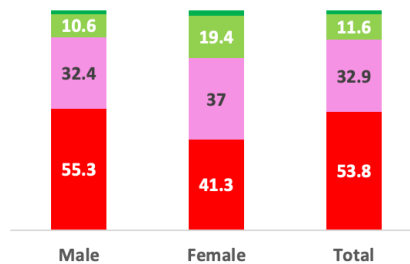


Figure 8c. Poor player skills

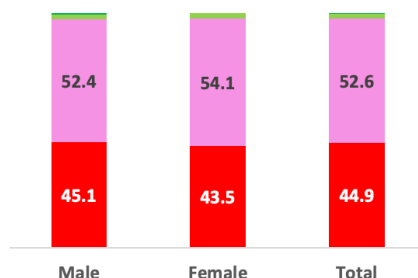


Figure 8d. Time wasting

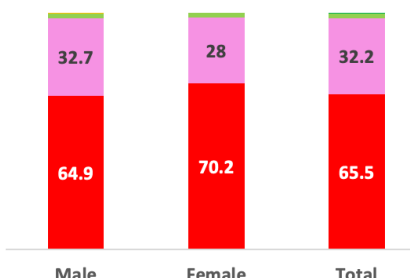


Figure 8e. Disrespect for referees

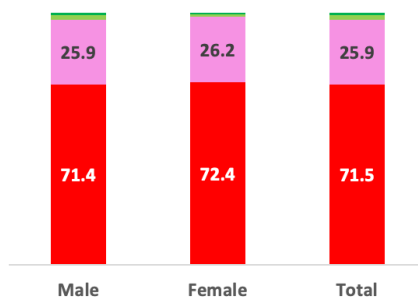


Figure 8f. Continuous use of the hand pass

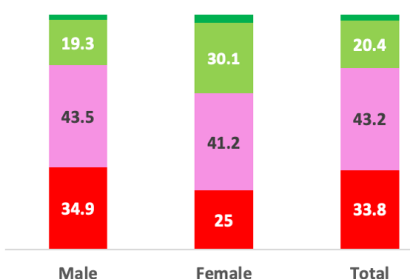


Figure 8g. Refereeing inconsistency

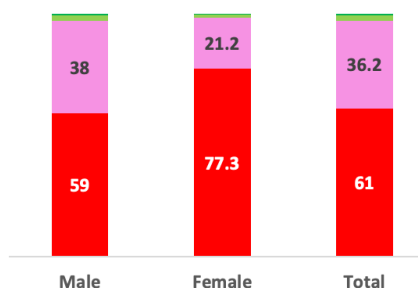


Figure 8h. Injury time/additional time inconsistency

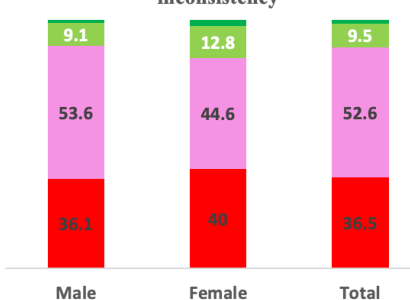


Figure 8. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by role in GAA.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

Figure 8i. Overly defensive play

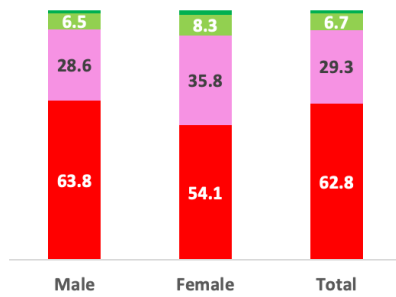


Figure 8j. Group tackling

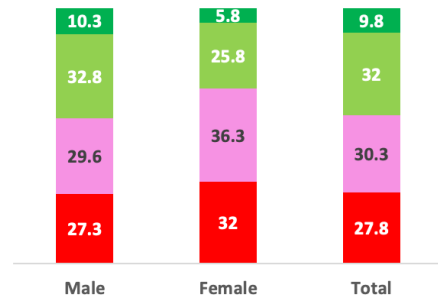


Figure 8 contd. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by gender.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

3.3 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL OF COUNTIES – SAM MAGUIRE VS TAILTEANN CUP

Figures 9 and 10 display the comparisons by different competition-playing counties. There was very little variation in responses between those in Tailteann Cup-playing counties, and those in Sam Maguire-playing counties. Results are mainly displayed for information and transparency.

Figure 9a. Cynical fouling

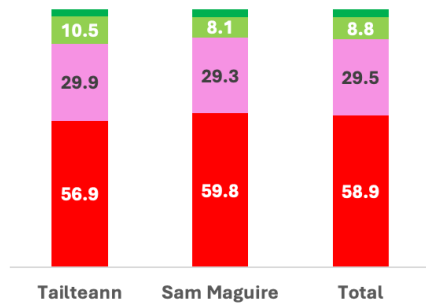


Figure 9b. Tactical fouling

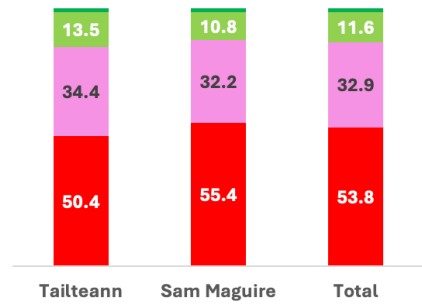


Figure 9c. Poor player skills

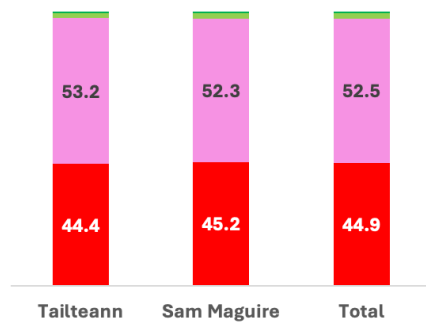


Figure 9d. Time wasting

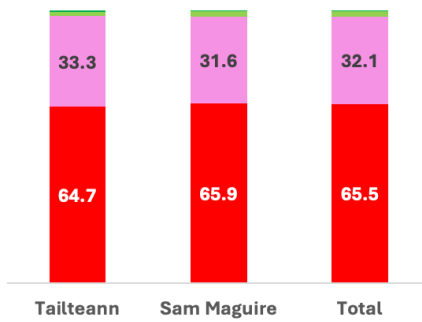


Figure 9e. Disrespect for referees

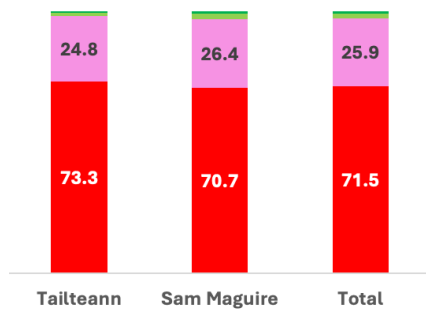


Figure 9.
Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by playing grade.

Red = Strongly Dislike
Pink = Dislike
Light Green = Like
Dark Green = Strongly Like

Figure 10a. Continuous use of the hand pass

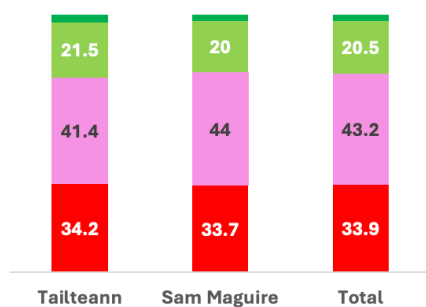


Figure 10b. Refereeing inconsistency

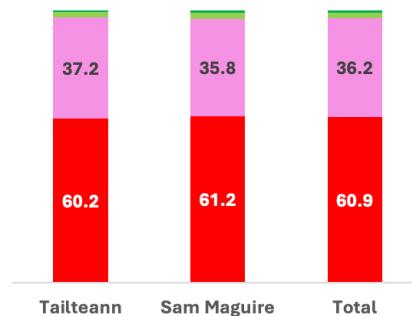


Figure 10c. Injury time/additional time inconsistency

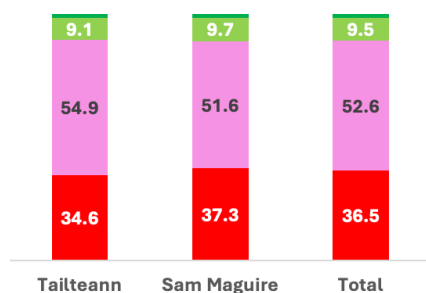


Figure 10d. Overly defensive play

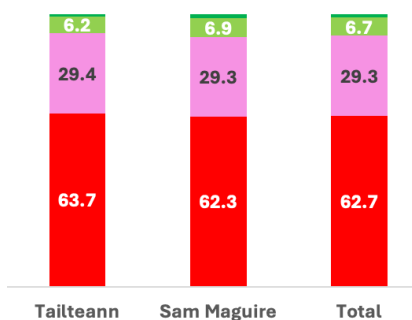


Figure 10e. Group tackling

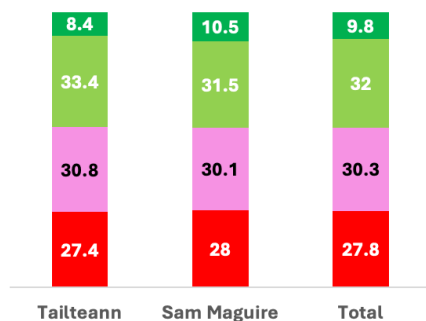


Figure 10.
Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by playing grade.

Red = Strongly Dislike
Pink = Dislike
Light Green = Like
Dark Green = Strongly Like

In summary... there was very minor variation across responses from participants in the two inter-county competitions. Therefore, it ought to be assumed that modifications to any of these aspects of the game (the eight where there were large proportions of dislike or strong dislike) would be equally welcome at these different levels of the game.

3.4 IMPACT OF SELF-REPORTED ROLE WITHIN THE GAA

In stark contrast to the results in the previous section, there was considerable variation in responses by self-reported role in the GAA (Figures 11 to 13). Figure 11a shows the results for **cynical fouling**, where a high of 90.3% of administrators expressed dislike or strong dislike of it, and a low of 75.3% of referees expressing dislike or strong dislike for it. Looking only at the strong dislike proportions (red columns), there are obvious differences between players and all other roles. It is not immediately obvious why these differences would be so; however, it is noticeable that those directly involved in the game (players and referees) were the least disliking of it, relatively speaking. Figure 11b displays the results for **tactical fouling**. There was a reasonable degree of consistency across roles in these responses, except for players, where a relatively lower proportion (than all other roles) expressed dislike or strong dislike of it.

Figure 11c displays the results for **poor player skills**, where there was both consistent, and almost universal dislike or strong dislike of this, and where the highest proportion of strong dislike was seen among players (48.2%), and the lowest seen among referees (37.3%). Figure 11d displays the results for **time wasting**. Again, very high proportions of participants from all roles expressed dislike or strong dislike of it, with a low of 95.2% of players expressing dislike or strong dislike. There was a greater degree of variation for strong dislike only, with a low of 57.7% among players, and a high of 72.9% among referees.

The results for role within the GAA continue in Figure 12. Results in Figure 12a show that there was widespread dislike (and/or strong dislike) for **disrespect of referees**, with little variation across roles. However, there was considerable variation looking at strong dislike only (red columns) where 90.4% of referees reported this, compared to 60.9% of players. Figure 12b for **continuous use of the hand pass** were less consistent or universal. Here, and in terms of dislike or strong dislike, there was a high of 81.9% among administrators, and a low of 71% among players. As was the case elsewhere, a lower proportion of those directly involved in games (players, referees and coaches/managers) strongly disliked this, than did administrators or supporters. Results for **refereeing inconsistency** are displayed in Figure 12c. As can be seen, there was a similar degree of dislike or strong dislike across all roles (illustrated by the height of the pink column). Looking only at strong dislike, and results show that twice the proportion of players strongly disliked refereeing inconsistency (71.2%) than did referees (35.5%).

Figure 11a. Cynical fouling

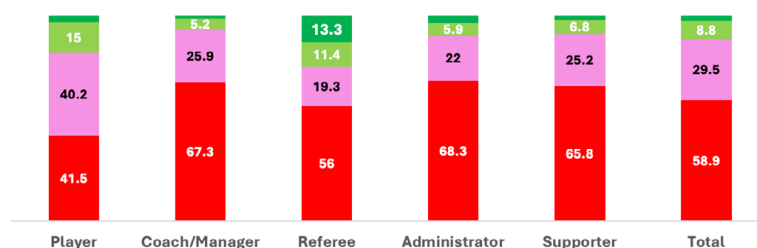


Figure 11b. Tactical fouling

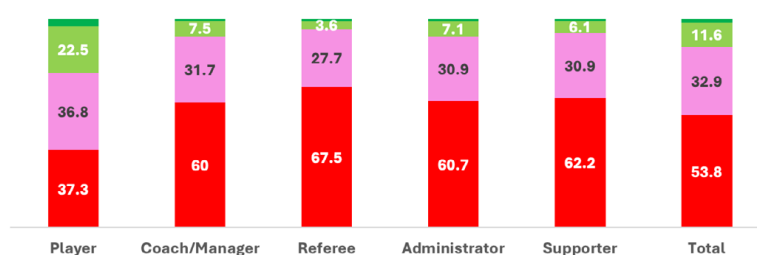


Figure 11c. Poor player skills

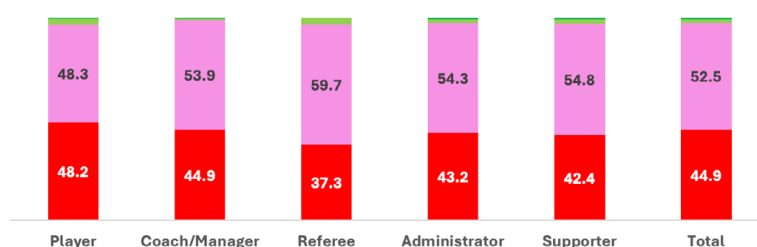


Figure 11d. Time wasting

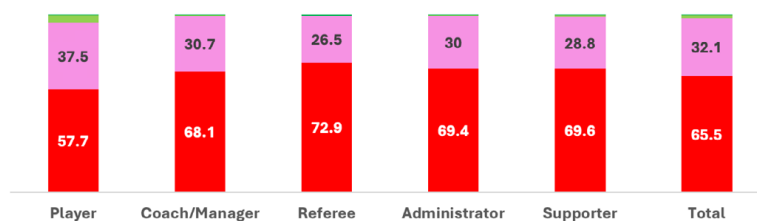


Figure 11. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by role in GAA.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

Figure 12a. Disrespect of Referees

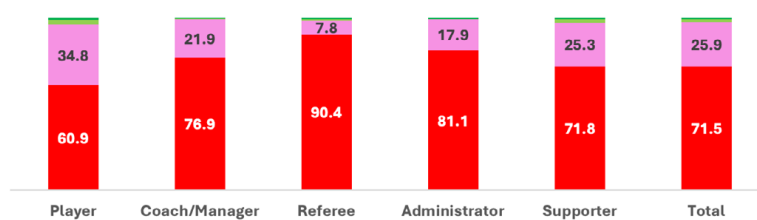


Figure 12b. Continuous use of the hand pass

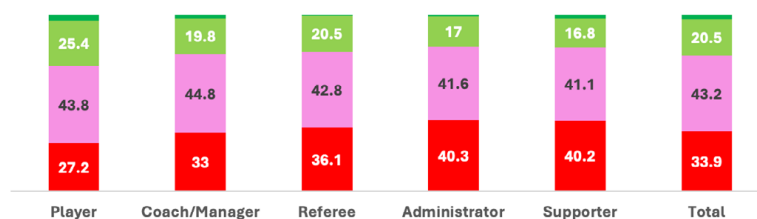


Figure 12c. Refereeing inconsistency

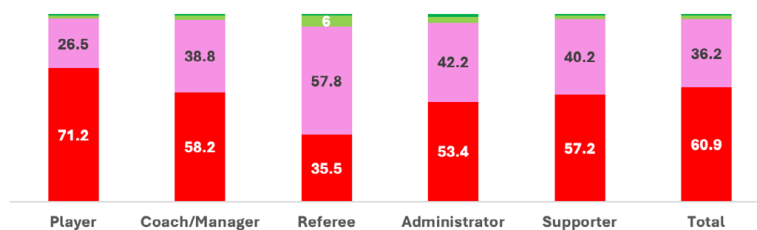


Figure 12d. Injury time/additional time inconsistency

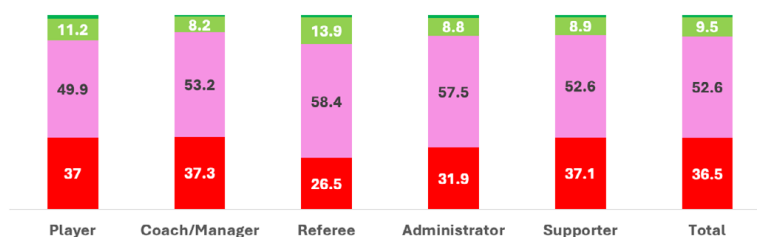


Figure 12. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by role in GAA.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

Figure 12d displays the results for **inconsistency in injury and/or additional time**. Large proportions from all GAA roles expressed either dislike or strong dislike for this, with a high of 90.5% among coaches/managers, to a low of 84.9% among referees. A relatively low (relative to other roles) proportion of referees reported strong dislike of this inconsistency (26.5%, compared to players, coaches/managers, and supporters (all around 37%).

Figure 13 displays the final two results. Figure 13a displays the results for **overly defensive play**. Again, large proportions from all roles expressed dislike or strong dislike for it. Lower proportions of players expressed strong dislike or dislike (55.5%), compared to all other roles (all > 64.1%).

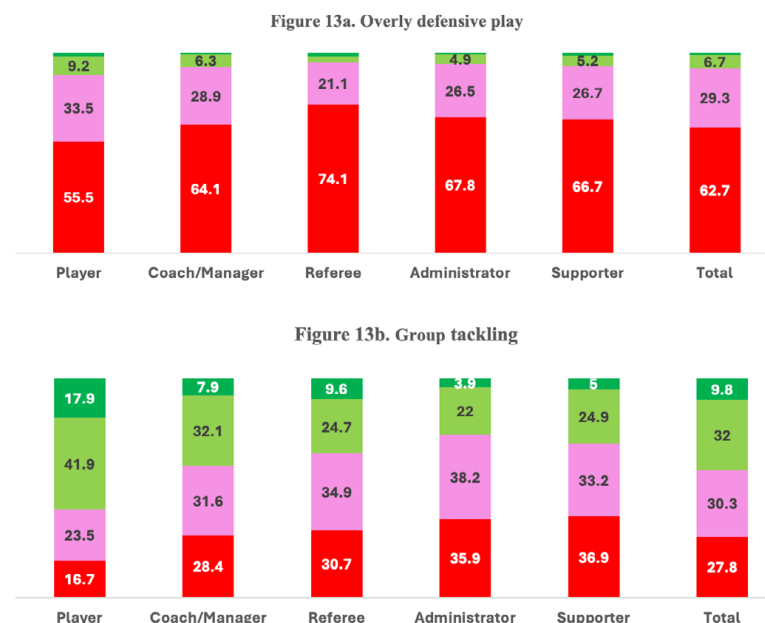


Figure 13. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by role in GAA.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

Finally, **group (or swarm) tackling results** are displayed in Figure 13b. Relative to other areas in this section, responses were much more diverse. Players appear to be the most tolerant of it (only 40.2% expressing dislike or strong dislike), while administrators were the least tolerant, with 74.1% expressing dislike or strong dislike of it. Indeed, in terms of strong dislike only, more than twice the proportion of administrators and supporters expressed this, compared to players.

In summary...there was a lot to unpack in these responses, relative to others. There was quite a bit of variation by role. Players appear most tolerant (lower proportions of dislike or strong dislike) of aspects such as cynical fouling, and group tackling. In both cases less than 50% of players reported strong dislike of these. In some cases, for example hand passing, or group tackling, there appears to be an upward trend in dislike which maps onto increasing detachment from play and administration. For example, in Figure 13 immediately above, there are increases in the volumes of red and pink colour from players through to supporters. The same is true for results for hand passing (for example) suggesting that with less direct and immediate involvement in match day activity, these aspects become more of a negative issue.

3.5 IMPACT OF AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

Figures 14 to 16 display the results for participant age. Figure 14a displays the results of the relationship between participant age and their views on **cynical fouling**. Results showed a clear age trend, with dislike of cynical fouling increasing markedly with age (for example see the steep increase in the red column with age bands, and the corresponding decrease in green colour with age). The same pattern of results is also seen in Figure 14b for participant views on **tactical fouling**. Figure 14c displays a completely different pattern of results for views on **poor player skills**. Here, there was consistent, and almost universal dislike of this across the lifespan, with players being slightly more lenient than all other roles. Figure 14d displays the results for **time wasting**. While there was almost universal dislike (height of pink column) for time wasting across the lifespan, there was a clear increase in terms of strong dislike for it with increasing age (increasing red column).

A similar pattern of results is seen in Figure 15 (further below) for **disrespect of referees** (15a), with general dislike in all age bands, and a clear increase in strong dislike with age. Figure 15b displays the results for **continuous use of the hand pass**. Dislike and strong dislike did increase with age bands, however, what is noteworthy is the fact that relatively large proportions of younger participants (those of playing age) endorsed more favourable response options on continuous hand passing (green colouring). While there was widespread dislike or strong dislike for **refereeing inconsistency** (Figure 15c), there was a noticeable trend downwards

with age for 'strongly dislike'. Figure 15d displays the results of **injury or additional time inconsistency**. The pattern of results was similar from age 21 onwards, however, for those aged up to 20 years old, the level of dislike was not as high.

Figure 14a. Cynical fouling

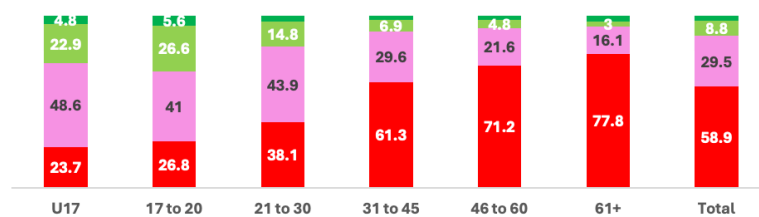


Figure 14b. Tactical fouling

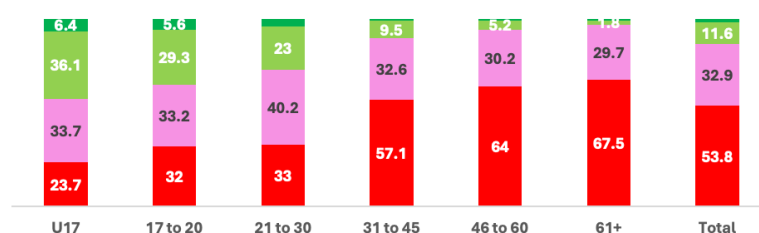


Figure 14c. Poor player skills

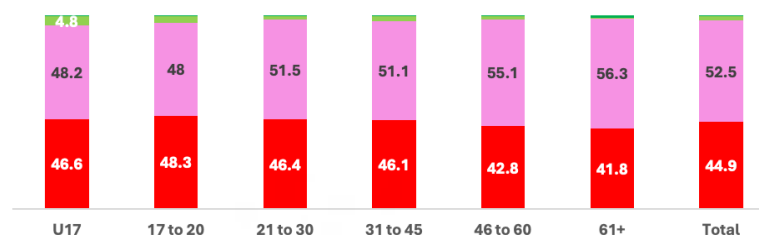


Figure 14d. Time wasting

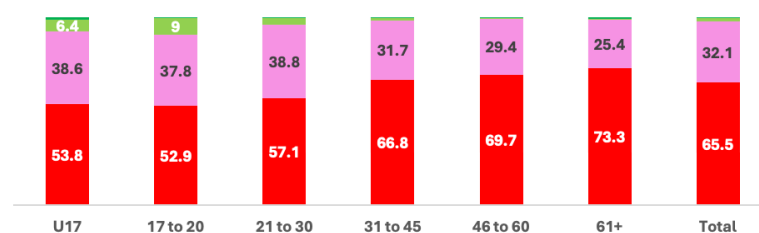


Figure 14. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by age.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

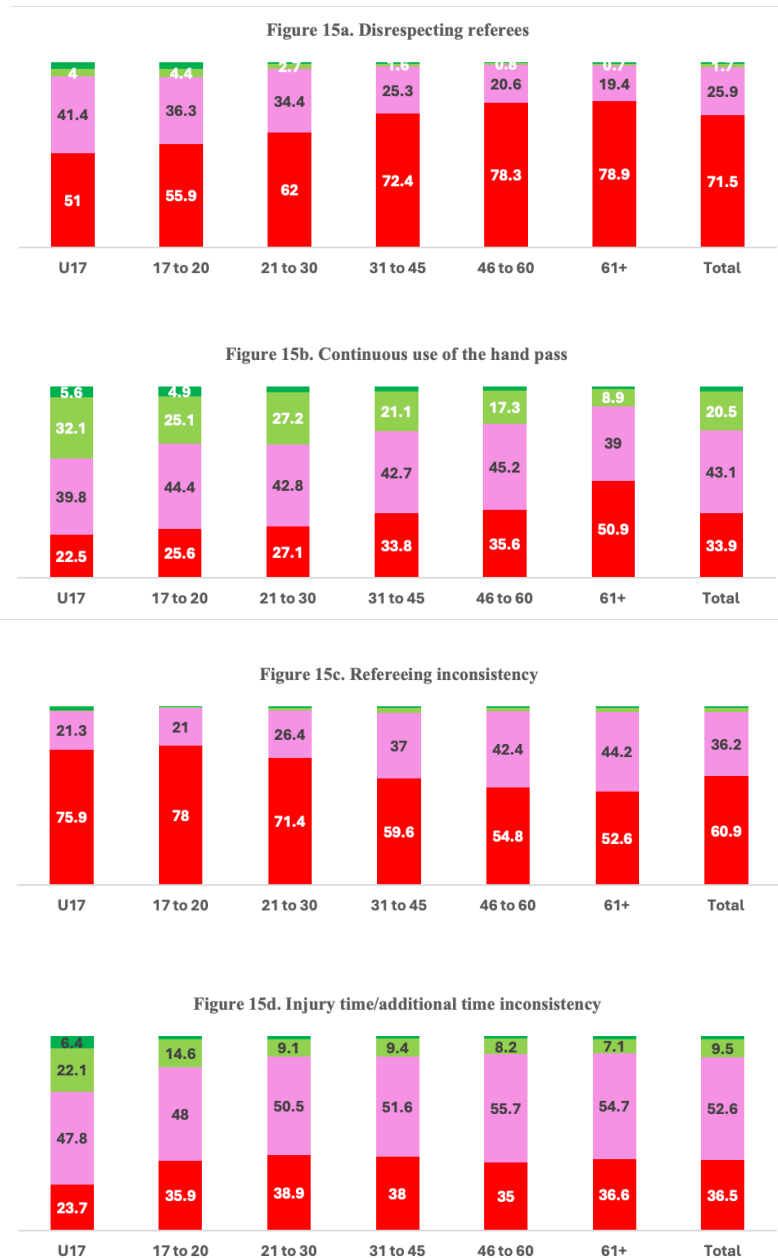


Figure 15. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by age.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

Figure 16 displays the final two results, by age. Figure 16a (for **overly defensive play**) displays a similar age-related trend to that seen elsewhere (increasing dislike with age). There was also an age-related trend in terms of **group tackling** (Figure 16b), however, in this set of results there were relatively large proportions in all age bands (but particularly younger ones) who did not express dislike or strong dislike for group tackling.

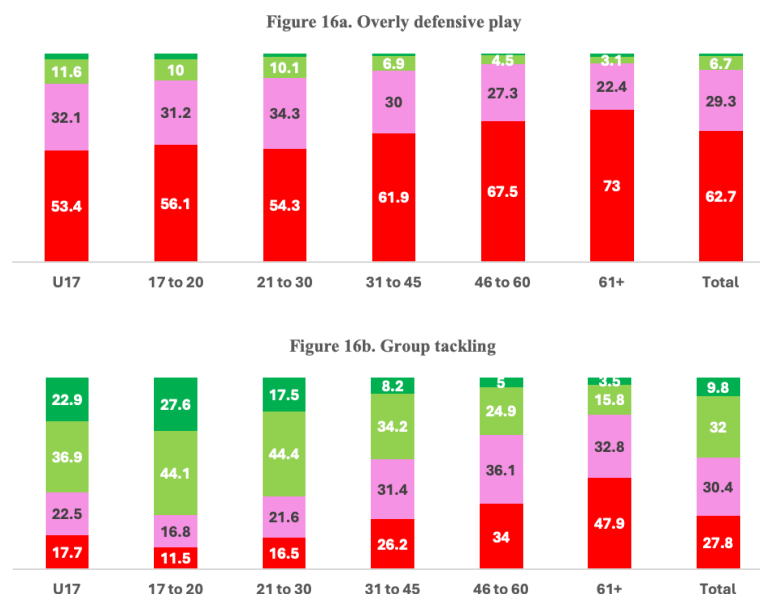


Figure 16. Responses to questions about specific aspects of Gaelic football, by age.
Red = Strongly Dislike; Pink = Dislike; Light Green = Like; Dark Green = Strongly Like

In summary... there was a clear age-related trend in many of these responses (for example cynical and tactical fouling, overly defensive play, and group tackling) where older participants were more disliking of them than younger participants, and in particular, participants of a playing age. Visually, this is seen in the increasing size of the red and pink columns (from left to right) in these figures. It would be unfair to say that there were 'older participant issues' because even in younger participants there are levels of dislike. However, it would be fair to say that the overall higher average scores are largely driven by older participants, than by younger ones.

4. PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF GAELIC FOOTBALL

Participants were asked to rank 10 technical skills of Gaelic football (1 to 10), according to how much they 'like' them. In survey order, the following were the skills listed:

- Catching skills.
- Kicking skills.
- Long range points (30+ metres).
- Blocking skills.
- Evasion skills (e.g. feint, sidestep, dummy kick, etc.).
- Correct tackling (e.g., near-hand tackle).
- Free kick, taken from the ground.
- Goal scoring.
- General creative skills by the ball-carrying player.
- Pick up/flick up.

A clear 'top five' emerged. In each of the analyses below, results for all ten will be presented in survey order, with a further, more specific focus on the top five in order of preference (total score).

4.1 IMPACT OF PROVINCE

Figure 17a (below) shows the relative proportions in each province in terms of endorsement of technical skills. Relative to others, **evasion skills**, **blocking skills**, **correct tackling**, **free taking off the ground**, and **pick up/flick up skills** were relatively poorly endorsed. Figure 17b indicates the proportions endorsing the top five skills, by province.

While **kicking skills** was the most popular overall (more than twice the proportion endorsing it than catching [38.6% versus 18.4%]), there was substantial between-province variation with 32.7% endorsing kicking skills in Ulster, compared to 49.4% in Munster. In each of the other skill areas, there is also variation across provinces, but to a lesser degree. For example, **scoring of long-range points** is the clear third most popular skill overall, with 20.9% of those from Connacht endorsing it, compared to 13.5% in Munster.

Figure 17a. Top rated technical skills (those most liked) by province (shown is % endorsing that skill)

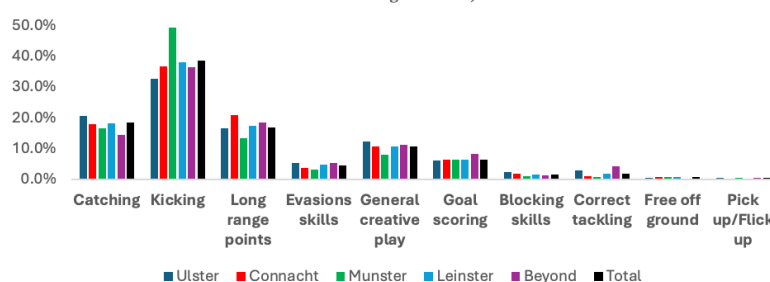


Figure 17b. Top five rated technical skills (those most liked) by province (shown is % endorsing the skill by province)

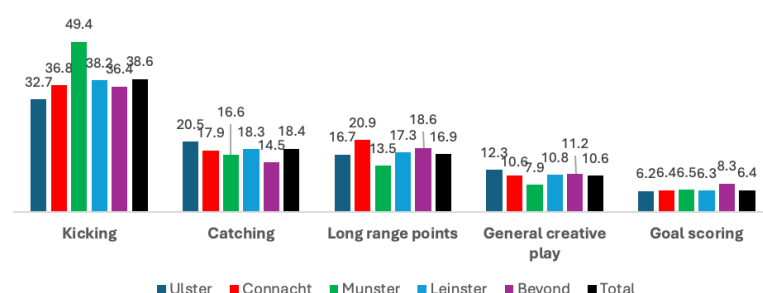


Figure 17. Results for the rating of technical skills by province.

4.2 IMPACT OF GENDER

Figure 18a shows the relative gender proportions in terms of endorsement of technical skills, and Figure 18b indicates the proportions endorsing the top five skills, by gender.

As can be seen below, there were some gender differences, notably for the skill of **kicking**, where a substantively higher proportion of males than females endorsed the skill. Readers should note that the lack of visual equilibrium between the blue and red (male and female) columns, and the total black column is explained by the disproportionate numbers of males (n = 6,590), and females (n = 787) in the analyses.

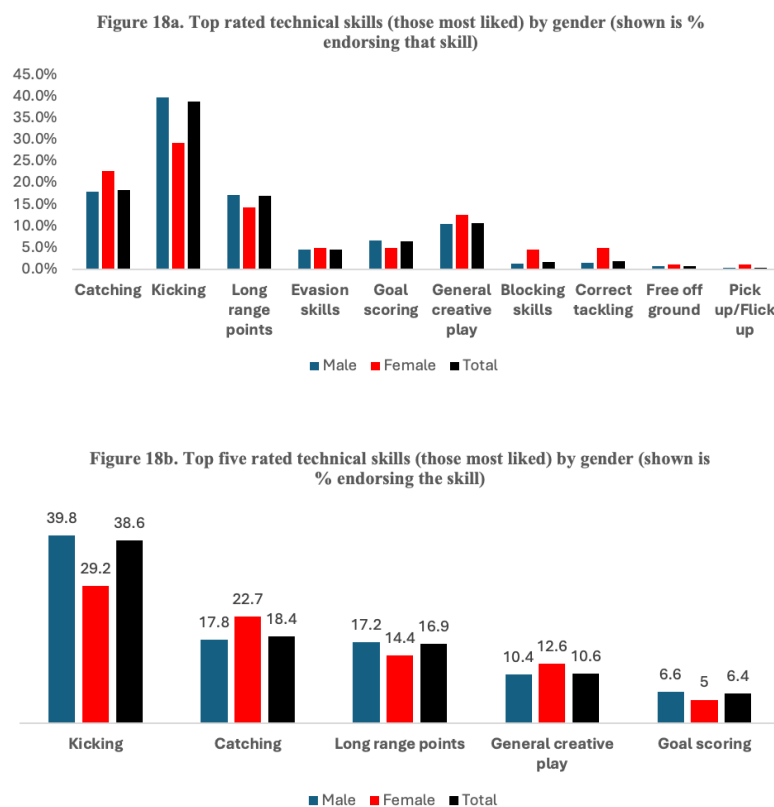


Figure 18. Results for the rating of technical skills by gender

4.3 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL OF COUNTIES – SAM MAGUIRE VS TAILTEANN CUP

Figure 19a shows the relative proportions in each competition in terms of endorsement of technical skills, and Figure 19b indicates the proportions endorsing the top five skills, by competition. The results of these analyses suggest that the competition level (for 2024) of the county that participants came from, had virtually no effect on responses to the technical skills question.

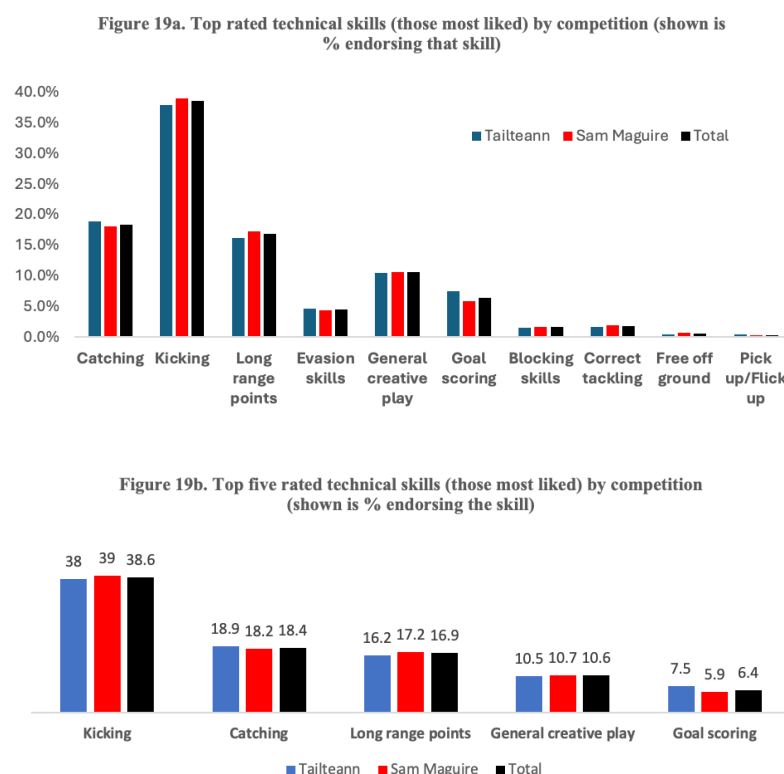


Figure 19. Results for the rating of technical skills by playing grade.

4.4 IMPACT OF SELF-REPORTED ROLE WITHIN THE GAA

Figure 20a shows the relative proportions endorsing technical skills in terms of their role within the GAA, and Figure 20b indicates the proportions endorsing the top five skills, by role. As can be seen, while the overall top five skills were clear, there was substantial between-role variation for the skill of catching. Here, more than twice the proportion of administrators endorsed this skill, compared to coaches or managers.

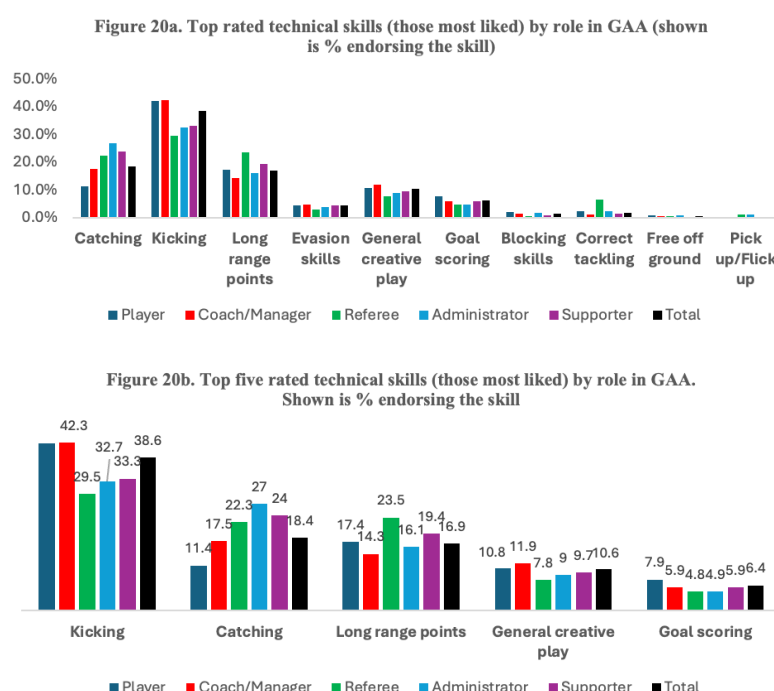


Figure 20. Results for the rating of technical skills by role in the GAA.

4.5 IMPACT OF AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

Figure 21a shows the relative proportions endorsing technical skills in terms of their age, and Figure 21b indicates the proportions endorsing the top five skills, by age. There are some noticeable age-related trends in these responses. Firstly, in terms of kicking, there was a steep increase in those of playing age (for the sake of argument up to and including age 30), endorsing the skill of kicking, from 26.9% at u17, to 44.7% at age 21-30. There followed an almost equally steep descent from age 21-30 to age 61+ in terms of kicking skills. There was an over four-fold increase in the proportion endorsing catching from age 18-20 up to age 61+. Scoring long-range points was more endorsed by younger participants (those aged 20 or under) than the rest of the sample, while the skill of goal scoring decreased in popularity with age.

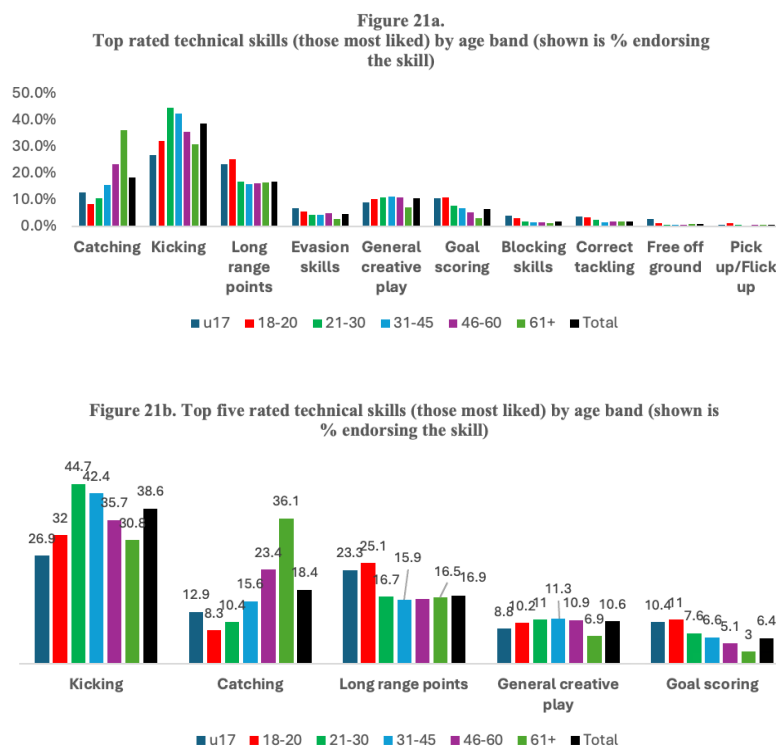


Figure 21. Results for the rating of technical skills by age bands.

In summary... there was an overall clear 'top 5' in terms of the skills. There was some variation in the degree of 'liking' across results, really with the exception of Tailteann v Maguire, where results (or proportions) were very similar. Taking Figure 21b (immediately above) as an example, the upward and downward trend respectively for catching and goal scoring (with increasing age) is visually evident.

5. PARTICIPANTS' FEELINGS ABOUT TACTICAL ASPECTS OF GAELIC FOOTBALL

Participants were asked to rank 10 tactical skills of Gaelic football (1 to 10), according to how much they 'like' them. In each case a clear 'top three' emerged. In each of the analyses below, results for all ten will be presented in overall descending order, with a further, more specific focus on the top three in order of preference (total score). In survey order, the following were the skills listed:

- 1 v 1 contests to gain possession of the ball.
- Taking on an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation.
- Good support play during speedy attacking transitions.
- Pressing from general play (i.e. tackling high up the pitch).
- Pressing the opposition kick-out (i.e. man-marking of an opponent, playing zonally, or a combination of both to force a turnover).
- All-out mass defense, something referred to as a "blanket defense".
- Defending man-to-man (i.e. not playing in defense a "sweeper" or what is sometimes referred to as a "plus 1").
- Kickout strategies employed to retain possession in the first instance.
- Possession-based tactics against an all-out mass defense, in order to probe and create space for scoring.
- Swarm tackling (i.e. 2 or more players tackling an opponent in possession of the ball).

5.1 IMPACT OF PROVINCE

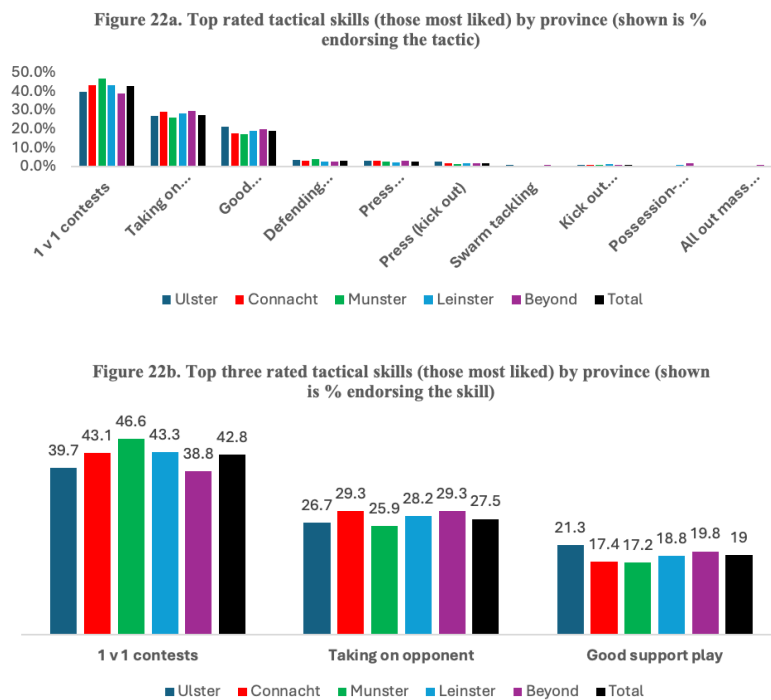


Figure 22. Results for the rating of tactical skills by province

Results for the tactical skills (Figures 22a and 22b) show that across provinces, three tactical skills stood out. These were: **1 v 1 contests to gain possession of the ball**; **Taking on an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation**; and **good support play during speedy attacking transitions**. The provincial scores for these are displayed above (Figure 22b). What is noticeable is that there was relative consistency across provinces or areas in terms of these findings. For example, in the case of 1 v 1 contests to gain possession of the ball, the overall average proportion was 42.8%, with a high in Munster of 46.6%, and a low beyond the island of Ireland of 38.8%.

5.2 IMPACT OF GENDER

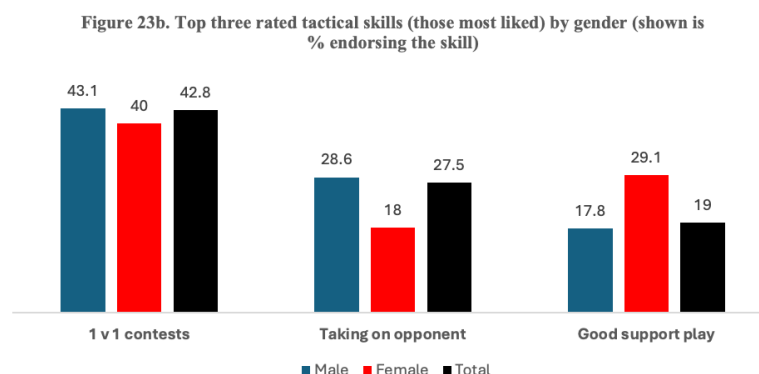
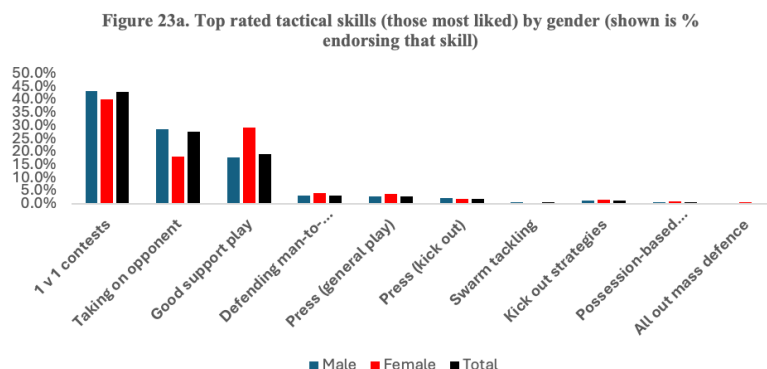


Figure 23. Results for the rating of tactical skills by gender.

Figure 23a displays the overall tactical results, by gender, and Figure 23b focuses on the top three endorsed skills and shows that a higher proportion of males endorsed the skill of taking on an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation, whereas a higher proportion of females endorsed the skill of good support play.

5.3 IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION LEVEL OF COUNTIES – SAM MAGUIRE VS TAILTEANN CUP

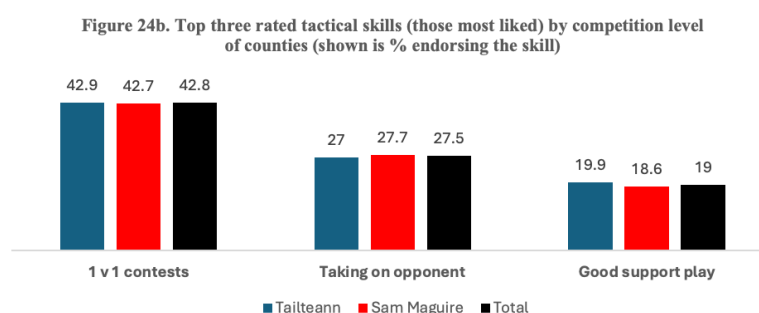
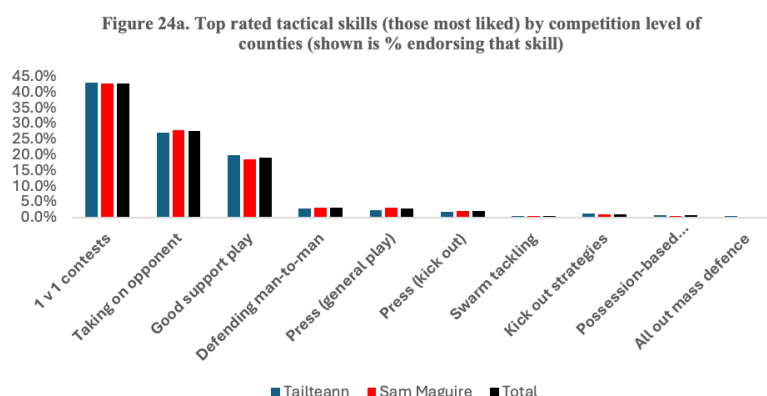


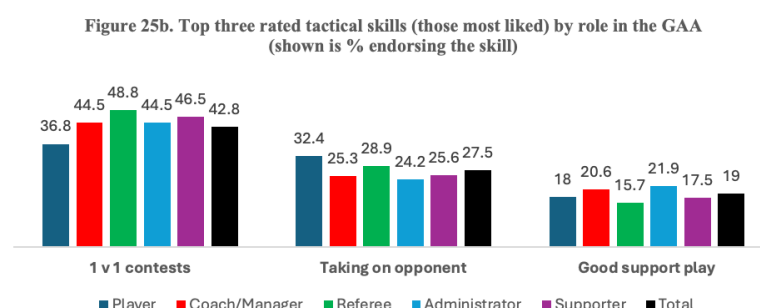
Figure 24a displays the overall results for Tailteann Cup versus Sam Maguire-playing counties, and Figure 24b focusses on the top three endorsed areas. As would be expected, based on Figure 24a these results reinforce the real lack of difference between counties playing Tailteann and Sam Maguire Cup competitions.

5.4 IMPACT OF SELF-REPORTED ROLE WITHIN THE GAA

Figure 25a below shows the overall results for role within the GAA, and Figure 25b shows that among the top three rated tactical skills, there was some variation by role within the GAA. For example, a substantively greater proportion of referees rated 1 v 1 contests more highly than players, while a greater proportion of players rated taking on the opponent more highly than administrators.



Figure 25. Results for the rating of tactical skills by role in the GAA.



5.5 IMPACT OF AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

Figure 26a displays the results by age bands. As in previous sections, results show considerable variation by age. This is better demonstrated in Figure 26b further below, which focuses on the top three issues. In terms of 1 v 1 contests, the trend is upwards so that with increasing age, this skill is more highly regarded. Conversely, in terms of the skill of taking on an opponent, the trend was for this to be less highly regarded with age.

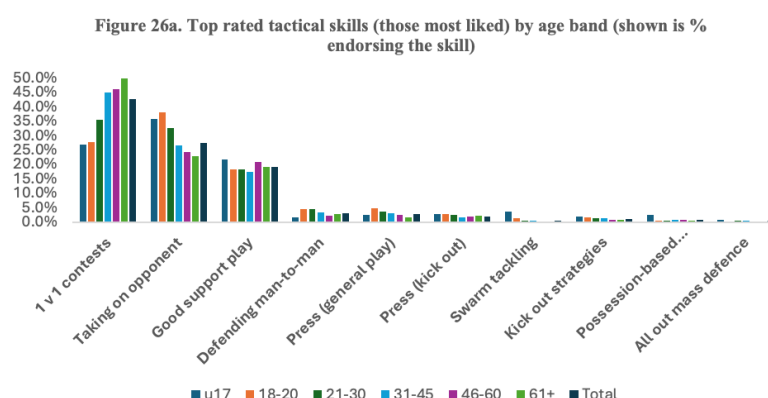
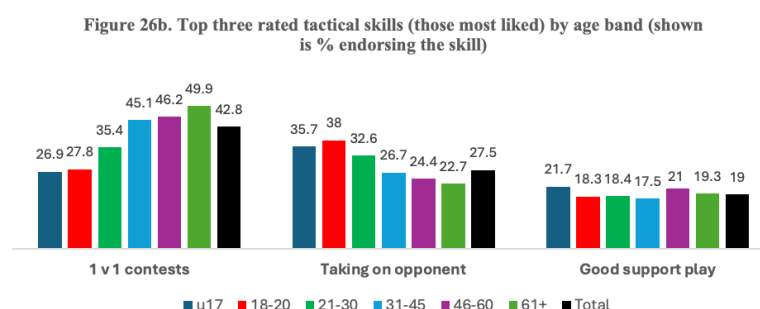


Figure 26. Results for the rating of tactical skills by age band.



In summary... The top three skills identified as being most liked were 1 v 1 contests, taking on an opponent, and good support play. There was some variation in the proportions endorsing these in the various analyses (with the exception of the Tailteann v Maguire comparison, where there was very little difference). Taking Figure 89 (immediately above) as an example, it is clear that 1 v 1 contests are better liked as participants get older, with the opposite true for the skill of taking on an opponent.

6. PARTICIPANTS' INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES ON GAELIC FOOTBALL

In this section, the multitude of open text submitted material was thematically synthesized. Firstly, all submissions were allocated a 'macro' level thematic code, for example, 'tackling', or 'limit zones'. This was done by two of the authors (MMK and CMK). These codes morphed slightly as the process developed, for example, the thematic code 'attacking' began as 'forward play', but with time and scrutiny, it became more obvious that attacking was a more appropriate thematic title. Or again, 'leave the game alone' became 'leave alone, or only minor changes', with increased scrutiny. The allocation of a broad thematic code was done when it was clear that the overall focus or point being made was about one main issue, for example, 'the tackle needs to be defined' would have been allocated the 'tackling' thematic code. A submission saying something like 'the tackle is a mess, and it needs to be clearer... we also need to look at handpassing', would also have been allocated to the tackling macro theme, with cognisance taken of the secondary point being made. However, there were many submissions which listed a menu of issues, with no obvious major one. These were allocated to a theme called 'a broad view', and data from these was included in the thematic analysis of the relevant themes. For example, a submission may have read '1. The mark; 2. The tackle; 3. Only allow 6 players up'; 4. Refereeing is terrible'. Here it was impossible to allocate that to a specific macro theme, but the relevant information was taken account of in the themes (respectively) the mark, tackling, limiting play(ers), and officiating.

The process described above was a success, insofar as it resulted in the clustering of (at times almost verbatim) very similarly worded submissions. This allowed for a synthesizing of material, and the extraction of sub-themes. For example, within the theme of tackling, it was clear that sub-themes included things like cynical fouling, the need to clearly define the tackle, and so on. In order to substantiate the synthesized material, direct quotations are included below. These were chosen 'blind' to the participant. In other words, the quotations were included and only after the section was written and edited, was the identifying information included. Therefore, there was no attempt made to 'steer' the age, gender, location, or role of participants whose submissions were used to substantiate the validity of the sub themes. Each of the themes extracted or identified, is described immediately below. These are presented in theme alphabetical order.

6.1 ATTACKING PLAY



Make Gaelic football an exciting spectacle again!!! Unfortunately, the current offering is boring, with sideways lateral and backward passing and an overuse of the handpass making it a very difficult watch. Safety First is the mindset.

Male, 46-60, Kerry (Supporter)

I was at an intermediate championship match last year where all of the defending team were behind their own '45. The team attacking put the ball on the ground on their '45 and stopped playing to illustrate how bad the defence was. I just left and went home

Male, 46-60, Cork (Supporter)

An exciting spectacle, a high scoring game that features speedy attacking plays and 1 versus 1 contests. We need a game to have over two thirds of passes going forward. We need a game where players are encouraged to have a go and not take the boring option when it comes to a shot or a pass.

Male, u17, Roscommon (Player)

Attacking football with less handpasses and lateral or backward play.

Female, 61+, Mayo (Supporter)



Participants were, by and large scathing of what was variously described as 'lateral', 'sideways', or 'backwards' play, or passing. There was a widespread impression or feeling that teams and games lacked 'attacking endeavour', with teams happy to 'sit in' and recycle the ball. Many negatively contrasted underage (and even up as far as under 20) football with senior play, mainly at inter-county level, but increasingly at senior club level as well. At underage it was felt that the game was played 'in the right way', with attacking intent and teams trying to outscore the opposition, but that at senior level, it was felt to be too cagy and conservative.

More open play. It's difficult to pinpoint what could work... it seems the fear of making a mistake leads to endless hand passing. If we have the ball, we can't lose. Maybe a bonus point system of sorts might work or not work but something that rewards positive play.

Male, 31-45, Roscommon (Supporter)

An attacking game like we have at underage and schools.

Male, 31-45, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

At Senior inter-county level there is so much at stake for teams/managers that it is understandable for some to focus strongly on defensive tactics. However, I do think we need to incentivise & encourage slightly more attacking play via a change to the scoring.

Male, 31-45, Wicklow (Coach/Manager)

Where managers focus their teams on going out to win the game, as opposed to “not lose” it. The cynic might wonder whether some managers are trying to pad their stats to keep the gig, rather than improve their team as a football team.
Male, 46-60, USGAA (Administrator)

I would like to see a game where teams go out with the focus of playing to win a game playing positive football rather than approaching the game to not lose. I would like to see teams be braver and avoid meaningless sideways and backwards hand passing.
Male, 21-30, Roscommon (Coach/Manager)

In this section, more so than others, there was a fair degree of overlap with other attacking, or scoring-related themes. For example, attacking play was often linked with the need to ‘better reward’ attacking intent (more points for more long-distance scores), the need to create space for inside forwards and therefore to limit the number of players allowed in particular areas of the field, and the importance of creating one-on-one scenarios to allow for attacking (and defending) skills to be developed and displayed. Some described this as ‘old style’ play, where a players’ ‘first thought’ is to take a defender on and attempt a score.

For me it is very simple; to win a game you must score at all costs. That means attacking football with kicking as much as possible as it is called football not hand ball - that is a different sport. I am a very passionate GAA man and lately I am falling out of love with the game of football. First, too much hand passing and going backwards which we all know anyway, and second too much time wasting going on go up a point and try and defend awful to watch.
Male, 31-45, Kerry (Supporter)

High scoring, attacking football, with kick outs being contested at midfield”.
Male, 46-60, Monaghan (Referee)

Peil ionsaitheach agus imreoirí ag dul chun cinn, chan cispheil taobh go taobh nó... ag dul siar i gcónaí. Foirne peile ag dul amach agus aidhm acu baint, seachas ag dul amach agus aidhm acu gan cailleadh.
Fear, 31-45, Ard Mhacha (Riarthóir)

There were calls for a rule to be introduced that would prohibit the ball being carried backwards, after a certain point in an attacking phase of play. In addition to attacking in terms of open play, and the longing for this to happen more, there were multiple calls to incentivise forward momentum by making it compulsory to kick the dead ball in a forward direction (from frees, and sideline balls).

A game where no frees or sideline balls are kicked backwards.
Male, 46-60, Westmeath (Coach/Manager)

Attacking play encouraged by prohibiting passing or carrying back the ball over the 45 metre lines and the midfield line. Limiting the amount of handpasses would also help. Two points for kicking a point from play outside the 45m lines and 4 points for a goal.
Male, 61+, Wicklow (Supporter)

Attacking style of play, I hate to see a team kicking a free kick backwards, or a side line ball backwards.
Male, 46-60, Antrim (Referee)

Related to the direction of passing of the ball, there were calls to ban the back-passing of the ball to the goalkeeper. It was felt that this slows the game down and creates a ‘defensive mindset’. Some participants argued that there needed to be a ‘mentality shift’ or change of approach to Gaelic football altogether, but that this needed support in the form of structural (rule) changes. This change of mindset was suggested to be needed at the level of coaching and game tactical development. Some felt that players were ‘over-coached’ meaning that natural skill and spontaneous attack-related decision-making was being lost in favour of playing to a rigid team style or shape.

Ban the passing back of the ball to the goalkeeper in Gaelic football.
Male, 61+, Laois (Administrator)

Game being based on open attacking football to display our unique skills, as players are fit and talented to do, yet the game has become far too defensive and boring to watch and play. Players have become too robotic and should have freedom to utilise talent and skills.
Male, 61+, Antrim (Administrator)

Free flowing, attacking football. Players currently look as though they are over-coached with a focus on possession and as a result are afraid to even take a shot. This makes for painful viewing. Managers/coaches need to let players play with freedom again.
Female, 31-45, Galway (Supporter)

As might be expected in the context of responses about attacking play, the 'mass' or 'blanket' defence was much discussed and maligned. Many suggested that it was 'spoiling' or 'ruining' the game. In addition to the negative impact of blanket defences on the attacking side of the game, there were those who believed that it was also having a detrimental impact on the art of defending, particularly one-to-one defending skills.

Blanket defence system has ruined Gaelic football. The game only comes alive when that team who are playing that type of defensive system are down by 3 or more points, and they have to come out of that shape.

Male, 21-30, Kerry (Supporter)

Blanket defence is destroying the game, needs to be more emphasis on attacking football. It is getting hard to watch Gaelic football at inter-county level.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Supporter)

Would like to see a game where possession is not king. Players are not afraid to kick pass a ball. No over/back the field. Moving forward. We are losing the art of defending 1v1 due to blanket defence system. Reward the teams trying to play entertaining football.

Male, 31-45, Leitrim (Coach/Manager)

Finally, there was some mention of 'the last 10 minutes' of games. Participants believed that the default inter-county set-up these days is to 'stay in the game' until the last ten minutes, and then to attack in the hope of 'nicking the winner'. There was a longing and hope that this attacking mindset could and should be more evident across the entire game.

If we could reflect the type of play from the last 10 minutes of a game when teams let the shackles off and try and win a game. The open play of attack and defence. I understand player fatigue allows for this scenario but if we can create a game that promotes this type of play. The offensive mark needs to go also, encourage taking the player on.

Male, 21-30, Mayo (Player)

6.2 FAST-FREE FOOTBALL

Free-Flowing
Fast
Scoring
Forward
Attacking
Long Range
Take Him On
Expansive
Open
Kicking
Passing

A more free-flowing sport, enjoyable to watch and play. As a playing club player during our first championship match last year, when winning in to the second half I told myself this would be my last year playing as the game was so unenjoyable. In summary the match finished 9-8 with our opposition scoring 90% of their scores from frees.

Male, 31-45, Cork (Player)

An end-to-end style game where the first instinct of the player in possession is to move the ball forward.

Male, 31-45, Middle East (Administrator)

Eradication of slow attacking play caused by both deep-lying defences and possession-based attacking tactics. The advanced mark is not always rewarding skills and often slows down the game further. A time restriction on possession will force teams to attack faster and likely see deep-lying defences become less feasible.

Male, 21-30, Cork (Supporter)

Fast moving kicking game. Skilful player can express themselves. More end-to-end football.

Male, 46-60, Sligo (Coach/Manager)

A fast game with a key focus on the skill of kicking and one v one battles. There will always be coaching innovation and underdogs trying to limit their opponents' opportunities. But fans want to see the ball moved quick with the foot, risk taking with diagonal kick passes inside, 1 v 1 battles between top forwards and backs, goals and long-range points.

Male, 31-45, Roscommon (Player)



There was a substantial body of submissions which were themed as wishing for or suggesting the facilitation of 'fast' and/or 'free' football. These differed from the submissions allocated to the 'attacking' theme, mainly because the speed and freedom were not necessarily related to forward play. Submissions hoped almost for an intense, energetic, even frantic style of play, which many contrasted with the 'pedestrian' style often on display currently. Several often-used words in this section included 'exciting' and 'expansive'.

Two teams going at it, without being naïve.
Male, 61+, Kerry (Supporter)

A fast-attacking game with plenty of turnovers and no short kickouts.
Male, u17, Derry (Player)

It would be great to see a little bit of chaos come back into the game, the uncertainty of what might happen next... at present it is very mechanical, retain possession around the arc, penetrate/loop/backdoor cut with support, recycle until high % chance of score arises. I believe that the best type of chaos comes from contests, and ensuring contests all over the field will help create a more attractive game for supporters. Because as a lifelong fan/player/coach I am no longer engaged with the spectacle.
Male, 31-45, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

A frantic game that goes end to end where there is reward for putting the ball into dangerous situations and where losing the ball from delivering such a ball can be seen as acceptable for the player. Some semblances of a recognisable shape from both teams to allow for this.
Male, 31-45, Kerry (Player)

The phrase 'free flowing' was used a lot. In addition to its obvious meaning, participants gave some examples of scenarios and situations which mitigate against fast play. These included the time wasted around free taking (the argument was made that these should be allowed to be taken immediately, with some even suggesting a toe tap be allowed in some circumstances).

A faster game where frees can be taken immediately rather than allowing the opposition time to set up and thus the attacking team lose the advantage of having been awarded a free. Better application of the advantage rule".
Male, 46-60, Galway (Supporter)

A free fast flowing game where the objective is to score, cutting out continuous playing the ball backwards and sideways and one in which players feel they can play with flair and that their skill levels are not inhibited with boring defensive style ball retention".
Male, 46-60, Antrim (Coach/Manager)

Introducing "tap and go" frees, like rugby, I believe it would stop cynical fouling and speed up the game.
Male, 31-45, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Some of the submissions made a direct link between faster and freer play, and the creation of more scoring opportunities (particularly goals), or to attacking play more generally.

Flowing attacking football with player-on-player contests and more scoring with emphasis on goals.
Male, 31-45, Roscommon (Coach/Manager)

More jeopardy in possession and in static play encouraging quick, positive, forward play of the ball by kick into the 'danger zone' or by hand to fast moving support players (ideally ahead of the ball). More play of the ball into space to stretch defences and create openings for goals.
Male, 46-60, Down (Coach/Manager)

A game that rewards use of fast transition from defence to attack using both kicking and strong running. There should be adequate space for the full forward line to play in, to encourage good forward movement, risk-taking through the use of a kick pass.
Male, 21-30, Provincial Council of Britain (Player)

However, the submissions concerning fast and free play were not exclusively about attacking play and were sometimes mentioned in relation to football skills more generally. There was some suggestion that the slow and cautious approach to football these days also related to the pressure to win (sometimes discussed in terms of coaching staff ambition and remuneration), essentially that the fear of failing dominates the potential joy of winning.

A progressive, fast-paced footballing spectacle that places primacy on skill, movement, speed of thought and intelligence, while also rewarding defensive and out-of-possession skills such as turnovers, blocking and efficient tackling. Encourage fundamentals such as kicking long range scores, kick passing, intelligent movement.

Male, 46-60, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

Winning is everything. Conservative play emerges out of fear.

Male, 46-60, Clare (Coach/Manager)

Fast open football based on skill, speed and creativity. Skilful players not to be neutralised by systems such as mass defence and swarm tackling and cynical play.

An open game focused on skill and free flowing football. I'm sure this is what the majority would like to see but the obsession with winning at all costs is what leads to the overly defensive football we see these days.

Male, 46-60, Cork (Coach/Manager)

At the moment I feel the game lacks urgency because of the monotonous periods of sideways passing around the middle of the pitch - at games people now have time to be looking at their phone cos they miss nothing for long stretches with all the sideways and backwards passing. We need faster ball into the inside line for a contest.

Male, 31-45, Cork (Coach/Manager)

6.3 HAND PASSING

Handy Option
Must Kick It
Limit to Two
Rule
Ban It
Fewer
Not a Skill
Overused



I am on the hurling side of the GAA and never played football, but it is pretty much unwatchable at senior inter-county level. The fundamental problem is the fact that in football the player is never forced to make a play. In contrast to hurling if you take the sliotar into your hand for a second time everyone knows you have to make a play, so players attack the player in possession. In football all anyone has to do is to remember not to bounce the ball twice. Handpassing is really just a symptom of the problem as there is no contests for the ball, so handpassing is the most secure way to maintain possession.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

A game where handpasses are limited and long-range shots are actually used.

Male, 17-20, Waterford (Player)

The genesis of Gaelic football's demise began two to three decades ago with certain teams monopolizing the hand-pass and employing fifteen players behind the ball in a structure more akin to rugby league. Watching a team string 30 or 40 hand-passes over and back across the field of play doesn't do much for the punter in the stand and a lot of them are voting with their feet. Considering the detrimental effect, the hand-pass has had on Gaelic football over those decades why would anybody look anywhere else. Keeping it simple and adjusting the rule to one hand-pass only per phase reintroduces football to the game of football. Therefore 'if you get a hand-pass you can't give one'. This will immediately lead to a much more open and dynamic game with no hiding place for players who are currently monopolising the hand passing game.

Male, 61+, Dublin (Supporter)

There was a considerable amount of stinging criticism of the hand pass as a (non) skill in its own right, but also of the nature and extent of its use in modern football. There were calls for its complete abolition, for strict enforcement of it needing to involve a closed fist, or for limitations on the number of consecutive times it could be used in a given phase of play. The overwhelming sense of those that submitted on the hand pass was negative, with few seeing it as a skill, or something to be admired, perhaps at best, a 'necessary evil'. By their nature, submissions on 'less hand passing' and/or 'more kick passing' can be seen as essentially the reverse of each other. However, not all submissions on these themes commented directly on the other.

There were calls for precise forms of limitation to the hand pass. These are outlined below in direct quotes from participants.

A certain amount of hand passes [allowed] to get out of your own half.
Male, u17, Meath (Player)

After a team has made 3 consecutive hand passes in a phase, the ball must then be played by a foot pass.
Male, 46-60, Monaghan (Referee)

Have a maximum of 3 consecutive handpasses going backwards, then a free awarded to opposition if there is more than 3.
Male, 46-60, Antrim (Coach/Manager)

This rule will prevent players from looping handpasses over 20 yards. This will encourage foot passing while also encouraging more aggressive defending as there will be a reasonable chance of forcing a turnover anywhere on the field.
Male, 21-30, Limerick (Supporter)

Forbid two consecutive hand passes. It would be easy to implement/referee.
Male, 31-45, Cork (Player)

In addition to 'tweaks to the rules to limit numbers of hand passes, there were also some calls for an outright ban on hand passing.

Abolish the hand pass, except for [the] goalkeeper.
Male, 46-60, Tipperary (Supporter)

Eliminate or minimise handpass. It's slowing the game and it's dreadful to see players choosing a handpass over a kick pass over 10 yards or more.
Male, 31-45, Kerry (Supporter)

Related to calls for changes to the hand passing rules, were calls for scores using the hand to be banned.
"All scores by foot, no scores by hand".
Male, 46-60, Cork (Administrator)

Therefore, no need for goal to be 4 points as players are forced to shoot for goal as fisted point is banned.
Male, u17, Clare (Player)

Ban the handpass in all circumstances except for where the player in possession has fallen to the ground.
Male, 31-45, Offaly (Supporter)

[The] fist pass or hand pass over the bar should be banned. We need players to be brave and shoot for goals.
Male, 46-60, Tyrone (Supporter)

Please get rid of the handpass over the bar. No skill involved whatsoever, and it is taking away from the excitement of a good goal/save by goalkeeper. Players are now being urged to take the "handy option" of fisting the ball over the bar and then just resetting for an opposition kickout. I see no value in the handpass over the bar.
Male, 17-20, Meath (Player)

There were a range of quite scathing submissions, which essentially attributed a lot of the blame for the 'ills of football' to the use/overuse of the hand pass. These are summarised by the two below.

Please deal with the very large elephant in the room, namely the soulless skill-less continuing slap handpassing being at the very core of many of football's ills. Please get rid of it or curtail. Without addressing this fundamental ill you are merely tinkering with it, and we can then witness the more pleasing aesthetic core skills of Gaelic football.
Male, 61+, Offaly, (Supporter)

Think how we can force the players into something - in the NFL, they HAVE to go for it on 4th down, in boxing, they have to go for a knockout, in basketball they have to foul (less desirable but you get my point!), in golf, in the league final - Dublin HAD to lob the ball in. Right now, teams don't really have to do anything - they can keep the ball for the full game if they like and never take a shot. Create more drama!
Male, 31-45, Meath (Player)

Finally, there were a relatively small number of submissions which gave support to the use of the hand pass in the context of fast and attacking football. These are represented by the submission below.

Don't have an issue as such with continual use of hand pass if the team in possession is going forward at speed. Don't like the lateral handpass when the opposition are sitting back.
Male, 46-60, Donegal (Administrator)

6.4 KICKING

Kick Pass

Kick and Catch
No Fisted Scores
Speeds the Game Up
Attacking
Put 'Foot' Back in Football
Expansive Game

I don't like the fisting the ball over the bar. This is not a skill and it's an easy option for players instead of taking on your opponent. It's called football for a reason.
Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

You can't really call it football anymore with the amount of handpassing... every season there seems to be less and less kicking.
Male, 46-60, Wexford (Supporter)

Gaelic football is so called because traditionally the ball was kicked. Overuse of the hand pass, in an attempt to minimize the loss of possession is destroying the game. It should not be allowed to palm the ball into the net for a goal. Only kick shots should count for a goal. Incentivise players to kick for points from outside the D.
Male, 31-45, Limerick (Administrator)

Kick passing, long range shooting and creativity is being kicked out of the game by coaching, this problem comes down to coaching in underage development. I often see it... underage players being given out to for trying a kick pass as if they've kicked it away in a Munster senior final. It will soon get to the stage that players that are coming through will not even be able to kick a ball 45 yards as they never used the skill at a younger level. If players are trained with kicking as a staple of their play at underage that will carry through to senior level and make it easier to reduce the fist passing and possession play we see today.
Male, 21-30, Cork (Player)

There were a substantial number of submissions focussing on the importance of kicking, and 'putting the 'foot' back in football'. There was widespread disappointment at the degree to which hand passing had taken over from kicking, and a nostalgic look back to times when the ball would have been 'kicked in' more frequently. Many argued that kicking is, and should be, emphasised (in coaching) as the primary skill of the game, but that increasingly, it seems to be in competition with hand passing as the default way of moving the ball.

Kick passing to return as the key skill in Gaelic Football.
Male, 31-45, Kildare (Coach/Manager)

I would like to see a game that places more emphasis on kicking the ball. While I greatly enjoy tactical battles, the side-to-side passing is killing creativity in talented players.
Male, 31-45, Leitrim (Player)

Elsewhere, there were calls for a 'better balance' in play between use of the kick pass and hand pass, the suggestion that a greater emphasis on (and use of) kick passing would lead to a greater number of one-on-one battles, and the suggestion that more kick passing would result in a faster overall game.

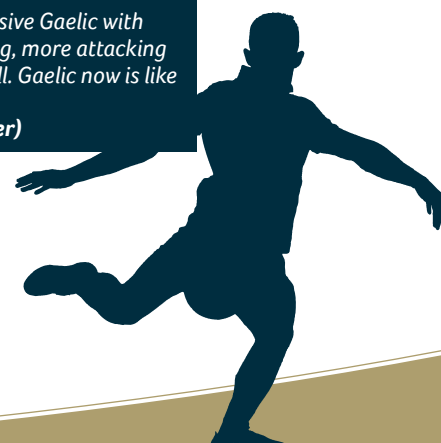
Kick passing with 1-on-1 battles.
Male, 21-30, Tyrone (Player)

A game with a good mixture of kick passing and hand passing.
Male, 46-60, Dublin (Supporter)

Kick passing game with rules to help quicken up the game and cut down on the hand pass possession-based game.
Male, 21-30, Louth (Coach/Manager)

Kick passing. Tight man marking game with incentives for forward players to develop and use their specialist skills i.e. taking players on and using dummy etc. Half back line and half forward lines moving the ball on and in quickly.
Male, 46-60, Tyrone (Supporter)

I would like to see more open expansive Gaelic with more kick passing, less hand passing, more attacking play and quick movement of the ball. Gaelic now is like rugby league, very 'set up.'
Male, 31-45, Sligo (Coach/Manager)



There were a series of specific submissions relating to the relationship between more frequent (and skilled) kick passing, and scoring. Some of these overlap with the submissions in the 'scoring' theme (greater reward for longer-range kicking).

Kick passing is key. Would love to see more 1v1 and when players have a chance of goal to take it on and not opt for to hand pass over the bar.
Male, 31-45, Dublin (Supporter)

More entertaining kick passing at speed, not afraid to shoot from distance and less fear by players to express themselves.
Male, 31-45, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Catching, kicking, running on to create scoring opportunities. I detest the blanket defence and back passing.
Male, 61+, Cork (Administrator)

6.5 'LEAVE ALONE, OR MAKE ONLY MINOR CHANGES...'



The game is constantly evolving. It will continue to do so in the future. The game is in a good place and is as good as it's ever been. Little change if any is needed. Nothing drastic needs to be done. The best teams who win the biggest prizes play the game in the right way. Those who don't, won't win the biggest prizes.
Male, 21-30, Monaghan (Player)

In general, I love the tactical aspect of the game. There is a negative attitude towards structured tactical play in Gaelic Football when, in reality teams need to find ways to win games and found ways legally to gain an advantage. I also love an end-to-end game, but I will happily watch a tactical battle too. As a player I appreciate how difficult the game is to play also.
Male, u17, Waterford (Player)

Football is so much more enjoyable than the catch and kick of the olden days, it's evolving for the better stop changing things please, no shot clock, keep the mark, allow players to hand pass, it's not that big a deal, it's better than just hoofing the ball away, just let players play, but protect the marquee forwards a bit more as they are the ones who make the game more enjoyable. The tactical technical side is quite enjoyable, not the catch and kick, the games are always enjoyable on the wider more open pitches around championship, make pitches bigger by requirement or something instead of getting rid of hand passes, some people actually like to keep the ball.
Male, 17-20, Tyrone (Player)

There were a substantial number of responses which were categorised under the theme of 'leave alone, or only make minor changes.' The main word in this section of response was 'evolve' or 'evolution'. In this context, participants were firmly of the view that the game is ever changing, driven by innovative (and responsive) coaching techniques, and that if left alone (or with minor tweaks) it will naturally find its own equilibrium.

I honestly don't think there's too much wrong with football at the minute. I think things move in cycles, and we will come back around to more attacking football soon. Players are just a little bit risk-adverse sometimes. I'm involved with a county team, and we're trying to play a faster, more expansive game.
Male, 21-30, Galway (Player)

I'm a fan of the current game and style of play, as opposed to games 20-30+ years ago... riddled with turnovers, poor passing, tackling and handling.
Male, 21-30, Down (Player)

Not much change needed. Teams not knowing how to attack is a bigger problem than blanket defences although teams have improved at this. Think we need to let the game evolve, as it has been, rather than change it too much.
Male, 31-45, Donegal (Player)

In addition to recommending that little or no changes be made, some participants argued that the game was in a very healthy place. They argued that harking back to a bygone era of 'chaotic kicking' was unhelpful, and that the tactical element, and the challenge for teams and coaches to put in place strategies and approaches to counteract realities such as the 'blanket defence', was intriguing. Indeed, for some, the standard of coaching in modern football is at an all-time high.

I believe the whole narrative on 'bring the kick back' etc. is wrong...Down v Derry in 1994 is known as a great game. Watch it back now and it's a game of tennis, kicking the ball back and forward to each other. The game is now more tactical and professional. Some rules such as the Mark need changing to improve the speed of game. When rules are made, coaches will come up with ways to work around them to achieve success, that's their job".
Male, 31-45, Down (Coach/Manager)

I don't personally mind the tactical game/defensive strategy side of the game but perhaps a shot clock would help to encourage teams to create shooting opportunities.
Male, 46-60, Tyrone (Coach/Manager)

There is little wrong with the game, let the creative coaches figure it out, until the rest learn how to.
Male, 46-60, Armagh (Coach/Manager)

I don't necessarily think the game is too bad at the moment, I believe that coaching is now at a higher level than ever before.

Male, 31-45, Europe (Coach/Manager)

At inter-county and at most club levels we need to be mindful of the improved athletic ability of our players. While sometimes this can lead to overindulgence in hand passing, when done well watching a team running hard and supporting each other is as entertaining as a 40-yard kick pass.

Male, 31-45, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

I enjoy watching the game and seeing how different coaches try to unlock the code of the other teams set up. I find kick out strategies intriguing both offensively and defensively.

Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Player)

There was criticism of the multiplicity of on-going ('year on year') rule changes to the game. Indeed, rather than 'tinkering with the rules' some believed that coaches should be left to help the game evolve, in the face of opposition tactics.

Realistically the game is going backwards at the minute with way too many rule changes each year. It's genuinely hard to follow and I'm a player and a very engaged fan. Simplifying the game, while promoting the basics of kicking and catching is what I want".

Male, 21-30, Offaly (Supporter)

Remove the mark as not native to GAA games; Please don't tinker with the rules; let good coaching evolve over time to address modern tactics, including blanket defence".

Male, 31-45, Meath (Coach/Manager)

I feel the game is not in as bad a place as some [people] make it out to be, young players are coached so well now at tackling it leaves it difficult to get the ball up the pitch faster, this makes the game seem defensive, but we can't neglect coaching tackling".

Male, 46-60, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

There was frustration with what was described as the 'constant' changing of the rules of Gaelic football.

The game does not need the radical change that many are promoting. The continuous changing of rules has not helped the game in general.

Male, 31-45, Carlow (Player)

I honestly think football is pretty good and part of the challenge is combatting current set ups, too many or at least too frequent rule changes can make it tough for referees to be consistent at club level.

Male, 21-30, Armagh (Coach/Manager)

I'd like to see a sport that is confident enough in itself to stop tinkering with rules and trust top coaches and players to innovate and update the sport organically. We have such an exciting sport, and it feels like the majority of discourse around it is negative. There were poor/boring games before defensive systems!

Male, 31-45, Antrim (Coach/Manager)

Leave the game alone. Not everyone dislikes the possession game. It's a game of tactics and skill. We hark back to the days of catch and kick. Were they really the glory days? I don't think so because I was there watching it. The game is much better today in my opinion but could still be improved. Making constant minor changes to rules is the most frustrating part.

Male, 46-60, Mayo (Supporter)

Some of the submissions highlighted the fact that making changes to the rules to influence set-ups or styles of play was somewhat foolhardy, as coaches and managers will always be able to either manipulate the rules or find ways around them.

Think there is very little wrong with Gaelic Football. I love how hard coaches and players make it so difficult for their opponents. Why should you get the ball and just kick it. The level of tactical approaches is so intriguing it has evolved so much. Why would we stop players and coaches from using their brains.
Male, 61+, Meath (Coach/Manager)

Although the overall sense of these submissions was that the game was in reasonably good health, there were a few suggestions for areas to be focussed on that could make it even better. Among these were the areas of 'mismatched' games, and the area of overcarrying the ball. Some examples are given below.

I'm not in favour of wholesale rules changes - the game is generally good as it is at inter-county level when teams go out and attempt to win by attacking. The issue is mismatched games where teams know they will be stuffed if they attempt to traditionally win. Games between teams of the same level are typically good.
Male, 31-45, Antrim (Supporter)

In general, most Gaelic football matches are quite enjoyable. The most important is that teams are appropriately paired with each other, although I know this is not always possible.
Male, 31-45, Donegal (Supporter)

The game is mostly fine as it is. There is one part of the game that, if refereed properly and consistently would change the game for the better immediately without any rule changes. That is the steps rule. As referees always ignore the amount of steps taken, especially as the attacker is lining up a shot, it means the defender cannot tackle him appropriately. The defender may have done everything he was coached to do correctly: close space down, get attackers head down, put him on to weak foot etc, however, he has no opportunity to then steal the ball as he is expecting the attacker to take a play which does not happen as he is allowed take 8, 9, or 10 or more steps before the shot.
Male, 31-45, Roscommon (Player)

Finally, there were some submissions which cautioned against 'too many' changes to the rules for fear of what were described as 'unintended consequences' (never defined).

The game will sort itself out in many ways so don't apply too many rules unless they are meticulously thought through; the introduction of the back pass in soccer was a simple rule and straight forward to implement but had a radical (positive) impact.
Male, 31-45, Donegal (Supporter)

6.6 LIMITATIONS ON PLAY/PLAYERS



Foinne 13 an taobh a thríáil féachaint céard a thiocfadh as. Níos mó úsáide a bhaint as an seisear cúntóir atá ag an réiteoir - i.e. maoir cúil & line.
Fear, 61+, Gaillimh (Tacadóir)

Football when played with attacking intent is still a great sport to watch, e.g. Dublin v Derry League final. However, there is generally too many games dominated by too much slow possession-based football with 15 men inside the defensive '45 and [the] other team keeping possession around the middle. [It is] Made even worse by teams who drop off kickouts to immediately retreat into this shape. [A] Rule change [is] needed to draw teams out (possibly one to enforce 3/4 players having to stay up in attacking half).
Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Supporter)

I would like to see 3 rules trialled together. Rule 1, you must keep 3 players in your attacking half and 4 in defending half. Rule 2, once you cross the halfway line you can't go back. Rule 3, no pass back to the goalie.
Male, 31-45, Dublin (Player)

Measaim freisin gur chóir riail a bheith ann go gcaithfidh an líne lán tosaigh (nó aon triúr) fanacht i leath an bhfreasúra. Laghdódh seo éifeacht an dianchosanta agus cuireadh sé deireadh le 15 taobh thiar den liathróid.
Fear, 46-60, Áth Cliath (Tracadóir)

The main sub-themes discussed in this thematic area were limiting the number of players per team; limiting the number of consecutive handpasses permitted; limiting areas of the field where individuals or numbers of players can go; and limiting the direction of travel of the football.

There were quite a few parallels drawn between 'modern' Gaelic football and both basketball and soccer, namely that 'everyone defends' like a soccer team, and in relation to basketball, that 'team transitions up and down the pitch (court)' makes it an unattractive equivalent to basketball. One focus was the restriction on the numbers of players having to remain within certain field parameters. For example, that teams should be mandated to always have at least three offensive players within the opposition '45. However, the nature and type of suggestions varied greatly both in terms of the numbers of offensive/defensive players, and the precise boundary within the playing area.

A game where there is only a certain number of players allowed in one half of the pitch... it leaves more one on ones.
Male, u17, Donegal (Player)

The issue of the utilisation of the goalkeeper in outfield play, and the general increased mobility of the goalkeeper in modern football was discussed. This related to time wasting at frees, congestion of play, and a perceived greater likelihood of handpassing because of the involvement of the goalkeeper in open play. It was felt that on occasion, goalkeepers can be involved in deliberate time wasting, particularly towards the end of games both by involvement in 'meaningless' handpassing, and/or slow forward walks to take frees. To counteract this, some suggested that goalkeepers should only be allowed one touch in a phase of play, that the goalkeeper is not allowed to leave the '21 area, that 'back passes' to the goalkeeper in live play are not permitted (sometimes qualified as being within the '21), or that, if the ball is passed back to the goalkeeper, he must kick it. Indeed, for a number of those suggesting restrictions on the goalkeeper, part of the narrative of giving higher points (4) for a goal was to discourage the goalkeeper from coming out of a designated area.

The use of the goalkeeper further out the field is giving teams 'an out' to hold possession and doesn't encourage a press. Could the option to prohibit the goalkeeper from using his hands outside the '21 be considered a foul. With a free from the D the penalty.
Male, 31-45, Cork (Supporter)

The goalkeeper becoming a sweeper has ruined the modern game, overcrowding sections of the pitch. Goalies should have to stay inside their own 20-yard line, and if a ball is passed back, they cannot handle it outside the square.
Male, 31-45, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

More high press is only possible by forcing the goalkeeper to stay inside the 21m line. When the 'keeper is allowed out, it's futile to press high, leading to more teams dropping off into defensive blanket.
Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Increase a goal to 4pts to discourage goalkeepers leaving their position.
Male, 21-30, Laois (Supporter)

It's ruining the game where a team wins a free in for example on the opposition '45 and opt to kick the ball all the way back to their own '45 or even as far back as the keeper... slowing down the game leaving it extremely drab for the supporters.
Male, u17, Dublin (Player)

A large amount of commentary centred on the reduction of team numbers from 15 to (usually) 13, but sometimes 14 players. In addition to a reduced on-field playing number, many suggested that there could either be 'rolling substitutes', or up to 6 or 7 possible substitutions in a game. Many comments attributed the lack of space in modern football to increased mobility of players (fitness and conditioning). Related issues were the increased levels of fitness of players, the space that would be created, the aiding of small rural clubs, and the nullifying of the blanket defence. 13 players with more bench rotation – encourage long kicking and free up space.

Space needs to be opened up on the pitch to help encourage more forward kicking of the ball, might be an idea to play 13 a side and also make it obligatory to keep at least 3 players in one half of the pitch".
Male, 46-60, Kerry (Supporter)

I would prefer to see more space on the field with more catch and kick. Have 13-a-side, and a panel of 20 interchangeable players on game day".
Male, 46-60, Tipperary (Coach/Manager)

A more expressive game showcasing the best of our game with 1 on 1 duals, fielding under pressure, and fluid attacking play. I feel a move to 13-a-side would create the required space to aid this".
Male, 31-45, Derry (Coach/Manager)

Defenders no longer have to defend as they have 14 colleagues to help them. Reducing teams to 13-a-side would greatly enhance the sport as a spectacle. I was a former season ticket holder but no longer go to games as they are boring".
Male, 61+, Tyrone (Supporter)

Some consideration needs to be given to the increased speed and fitness of players but the unchanging size of the pitch. Reducing teams to 13-a-side could have a significant impact on the game".
Male, 31-45, Cork (Supporter)

However, there was not universal support for a reduction in player numbers, as illustrated by the submission immediately below.

Please don't reduce the game to 13 aside. It's going to lead to more possession retention tactics which are a drain to the game. I would like to see players rewarded for taking on their man, but players are afraid to do so as IF they get turned over they'll be subbed. Maybe to change the step rule to 6 steps and properly enforce the 6 steps. Allows Attackers more range to attack, while still allows defenders the opportunity for a dispossession. Current steps rule is rarely enforced in both codes.

Male, 21-30, Clare (Player)

In addition to the other suggested benefits of a reduction in playing numbers, the suggested nullification or elimination of the blanket defence was high on the agenda. Many survey participants drew a direct connection between the two.

13-a-side which would hopefully eliminate blanket defences and with more space available would encourage more kick-passing. This may require a change in the number of substitutions from 5 to 6.

Male, 46-60, Tipperary (Coach/Manager)

At least 5 players from either team must be in one half of the pitch at all times. Hopefully this would help to stop the blanket defence. I would also limit the use of the hand pass so that every 3/4 hand passes there must be a kick pass of at least 30 metres.

Male, 46-60, Antrim (Supporter)

Players are much fitter these days as well and both trained and naturally aware of not giving the ball away. Therefore, we have blanket defences. I think the best solution is reduce to 13 a side to reduce players and congestion on the field. Simplest rule to change and officiate as opposed to playing rules.

Male, 31-45, Australasia (Coach/Manager)

I can't see any way past blanket defence without mandating 3/4 attackers in opposition half at all times with an extra umpire on the line to police them.

Male, 31-45, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

One of the frequently stated reasons for limiting player numbers and/or restricting playing zones, was the fact that **more space** would be created, in turn facilitating a faster and more skilful game, particularly in offensive play. More space would (it was stated) lead to more one v one battles, more kicking, and a greater likelihood of a more attacking game.

More space to allow expression on the pitch as opposed to tactical suffocation. Limit back passing and lateral movement which will encourage players to be brave in attack and attack more".

Male, 46-60, Louth (Supporter)

Defensive teams will more than likely want to drop their remaining 12 players, but I still think good attacking teams will poke holes in defences due to the additional space from less men being allowed to drop.

Male, 21-30, Dublin (Player)

Linked to the desire for more space, was the frequent suggestion of mandating that a certain number of defenders and forwards (usually three were suggested) being restricted to a particular area (usually 'inside their own '45, but sometimes 'inside their own half').

Having 3 or 4 players from each team staying in opposition half would at least leave more space in attack and possibly encourage kicking of ball to forwards when countering.

Male, 31-45, Louth (Player)

Reduce the number of players allowed in their own half of the pitch. Allow space for long range kick passing. Allow more space for attacking play and individual brilliance.

Male, 31-45, Cork (Coach/Manager)

Also given fitness levels of current teams, 13-a-side may be worth a trial to create more space (combined with having to leave 2/3 players up).

Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Supporter)

A further suggested limitation concerned the number of players allowed to tackle an opponent in possession. Suggestions varied from one v one, to a 'maximum of two'.

Limit the number of people who can tackle player with ball to two, and again "A maximum of two players allowed to tackle player in possession at any one point".

Male, 46-60 Longford (Coach/Manager), and Male, 31-45, Mayo (Supporter)

There were calls to enforce limitations around the kickout, so that they are all contested. The majority of those who commented argued that the kickout should have to pass the 45-metre line.

On kickouts, at least 4 from each team inside the opposition 45m, max of 4 from each team between both 45m lines.
Male, 46-60, Cork (Administrator)

I would like to see kickouts travel a certain distance...ban short kickouts.
Male, 46-60, Limerick (Coach/Manager)

That kickouts have to be fully contested.
Male, 21-30, Clare (Player)

There was a fair degree of commentary on imposing a rule akin to the 'basketball-style back court rule', where (for example) if the ball crosses the halfway line, it cannot then be played backwards. Some modifications to the suggestion concerned the precise dimensions of the 'back court', with some suggesting the 45-metre line, the 65-metre line, and others, halfway.

Once the ball is taken over halfway don't let it be passed (back) over the line."
Male, 46-60, Galway (Supporter)

End to end football... if you pass the halfway line, you can't go back. Attacking football...
Male, 46-60, Carlow (Administrator)

There were calls for limitations on handpassing. These mainly took the form of restricting the numbers of consecutive handpasses in a phase of play (usually to a maximum of three), whereupon the ball would have to be kicked. In addition, there were calls for a time limitation on substitutions (usually in the form of 'no further substitutions after 60/65 minutes), with the rationale being that it was sometimes used as a time-wasting strategy.

No subs or changes beyond 65 mins. This is killing the excitement at the end of games as tactical substitutions are used to slow the game down (unless genuine injuries - hard to police but at least let's try).
Male, 46-60, Dublin (Supporter)

There were other, less frequently mentioned suggestions regarding the imposition of limitations to the game. These included a 'slight' shortening of the pitch, the use of a countdown/shot clock which would operate akin to that used in rugby, or Ladies football (variously suggested), and the extension of playing time.

One simple solution to many problems is to extend the time of a game. 35 mins a half is very short. An extra 10 mins will bring more fatigue, more mistakes and disincentivise players bulking up.
Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Let's add some basketball rules, shot clock and you can't move the ball back once you cross your own '45. When I first started playing football it was so fast, with lots of scores, physical and very exciting. I played soccer too and it was a lot slower game with a focus on possession. I fear Gaelic football has become too like soccer and rugby and usually boring to watch.
Male, 46-60, Armagh (Coach/Manager)

6.7 MAN-ON-MAN

Possession
Corner Backs
Attacking
Contests
Passing
Players
Entertainment
Football
Individual Battles
Forwards
Blanket Defence
No Sweepers
Take Him On
Win the Ball



1 v 1 catching, 1 v 1 taking on the man, are such entertaining battles. The sooner the better for all of this to come in. I'm 21 years old and would love to be playing more exciting games. Games have become boring.
Male, 21-30, Clare (Player)

I would like a free-flowing game that is based on 15 v 15, no sweepers and no nonsense. Get the better of your man. Best coach I've ever had in GAA always said, "if enough of you win your individual battles today, we will win". And it rarely happens. People can coast by in defensive systems and hand passing around does nothing for the spectator and I don't see how that would contribute towards growing our game".
Male, 21-30, Kildare (Player)

There were many submissions calling for structures to be put in place to facilitate one-on-one, or man-to-man, or 15-on-15 football. Playing one-on-one was suggested to represent a freer, skill-based, and entertaining type of football. The type of football hoped for in these responses was variously described as ‘old style’, ‘old school’, and ‘old traditional’ football. While there was a large volume of material submitted on this point, there was relatively little variation in the submissions, beyond basic calls or demands for this type of football. The nuanced nature of the submissions is described below.

The man-on-man style of football was often described as ‘traditional’ and was said to stand in contrast to ‘soccer style’ tactics of playing everyone behind the ball, and then trying to ‘nick’ the game in the last quarter or the last ten-minute period. It was also described as ‘attacking and open’ football, in contrast to football played with blanket defences. Participants were of the view that this type of football placed emphasis on both skill and fitness, rather than the relatively ‘skill less’ brand of football seen in blanket defence-type play.

15-on-15 contests with space for both teams able to showcase their skills without being restricted. Open and free scoring.
Male, 21-30, Antrim (Supporter)

The argument was made that man-on-man play had the aim of trying to win the football game, as opposed to a blanket defence set-up, the aim of which was suggested to be ‘not to lose’. Perhaps the key word for this section was ‘contest’. Participants called for contests all over the field (corner backs v corner forwards; midfielders ‘battling for the ball’; and contested kickouts). Among some there was the view that ‘lesser’ teams have to play a swarm defence to counteract ‘better’ teams, and here, man-on-man play is probably unrealistic.

15 v 15 games where both team’s objective is to try win the game and not try stop the other team”.
Male, 21-30, Sligo (Player)

A game where there are more individual contests for the ball. Allow individual skills to flourish where the creative player will stand out”.
Male, 46-60, Limerick (Referee)

Back to a 15 v 15 game, man v man, as opposed to what we have today. There are only half a dozen teams that can play football today, the rest all try hide their weaknesses by swarming.
Male, 46-60, Kildare (Coach/Manager)

Can we see corner forwards taking on their marker and trying to score a goal? Or a corner forward taking on their man, and their marker holding them up and showing brilliant defensive skills. Players are surviving now based on physique, conditioning, and size. Individual skills, flair, or feints are not worked on then by forwards as they will never get a chance to take on their man realistically and will instead just have to recycle the ball. So many skills are not being seen anymore.
Male, 31-45, Wexford (Player)

One very specific point related to this theme was a call for tackling to be addressed and restricted to one-on-one tackles. In addition, that the officiating of tackling be improved, and the skill of ‘near-hand tackling’ be revisited. There was a sense that the skill of tackling was being lost amid swarm tackling tactics, and in the context of blanket defence and sweeper set-ups.

I think 1 v 1 tackling only should be permitted. If a second tackler joins in a free should be awarded. This simple change could lead to more emphasis on the skills of both defending and attacking.
Male, 31-45, Westmeath (Coach/Manager)

I would like to see 1 v 1 contests. I am not an admirer of group tackling of players in possession.
Male, 61+, Galway (Supporter)

I’d sum it up by saying I’d like to see 2 teams to go at each other & try to win the game from start to finish. It’s gone like soccer now, stay in it until the last 10 & then try ‘nick it’. Football isn’t a possession game it’s a raucous, chaotic, physical, end to end game & that’s what we’d like to see more.
Male, 46-60, Provincial Council of Britain (Coach/Manager)



In terms of additional submissions, a few quotes below illustrate additional suggested benefits of encouraging man-on-man football. These include a greater likelihood of 'catch and kick' football, the development of individual-level skill, and playing with freedom and abandon.

Man on man-type matches that show the real quality of either the attacker or defender and where the emphasis is more about the skill, technique and natural ability of players rather than what we have now, where S & C and very little natural ability will get you further, and if you can execute a 10 yard fist pass you can end up on your County team.
Male, 46-60, Armagh (Supporter)

Man to man battles. Freedom of expression, taking your man on. Kicking the ball and contested kickouts. Attacking players able to show their ability and the skills of defenders tested regularly. More speed, less lateral handpassing.
Male, 21-30, Louth (Supporter)

More 1 v 1 situations, players believing in their own ability and skill set to deal with these scenarios. Organised robotic athletes have taken over from the naturally gifted players.
Male, 31-45, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

There needs to be a focus on creating more 1 v 1 contests, with greater jeopardy and unpredictability in general play... the game is supposed to be entertainment like! The greatest obstacle to this is mass defences with dithering attacking play. Rules need to focus on unpacking the defences to create more space for scoring. A possible rule is a team needs to keep X number of players forward.
Male, 21-30, Offaly (Player)

There were also a relatively small number of calls for players to line out in 'throw in' positions for each kickout, with participants suggesting that it would help open space, encourage man-on-man play, and lead to a more skilful game.

6.8 NOSTALGIA



Have our football game back to the way it was years ago. A lot of skill and really going for it. High fielding and kicking the ball.
Female, 46-60, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

I am a young coach/manager (ex-player) who now has a son starting on his own football journey. Growing up my father brought me to club & county games, and this is where I fell in love with Gaelic football. A game then where contests were fought on an individual basis, where an accurate kick pass was played without consequences and where forwards and defenders engaged in battle on 1 v 1's. The game then was manic and played with reckless abandon compared to today's mundane defensive minded contests. Times and sports science have changed, the game requires a balance where fast front footed football is required to capture the imagination of the public again. This is the game I want my son playing.
Male, 31-45, Cork (Coach/Manager)

There was a section of the submissions, best described as nostalgic calls for football of a bygone era. While these submissions may have alluded to issues raised in other thematic sections (for example, one v one battles, or high fielding/catching), the context was very definitely that of a nostalgic call or hope to return football to a (usually described as 'better') era. Often, these would have consisted of brief and to-the-point statements such as "1979 football", "1990s style", or "1970's Kerry versus Dublin 1975-80". However, elsewhere, the call for the past was qualified, and detailed. Reasons for nostalgia included 'moving the ball at pace', 'direct and hard football', 'the ball was kicked and there was no handpassing', or 'players were able to express themselves'. These views are represented by the submissions below.

1994 Ulster first round game, Down V Derry is still one of the greatest games of all time and is a great template. A game which has more forward movement of the ball at pace, more physicality, more forward kicking and more high catching and contesting the ball at midfield".
Male, 46-60, Meath (Coach/Manager)

Return to traditional game of football. Get rid of what's on the sideline with their large egos, pushing a particular type of football, and allow players and spectators to enjoy the game of football again. When people are enjoying the game, they will come through the turnstiles in large numbers again.
Male, 61+, Offaly (Supporter)

I love what I call traditional style football. Catching, high fielding, long kick passing, running off the ball, moving forward. I love to see a great score at the end of good fast play. Backwards play frustrates me. Keep the ball in play, moving forward as often as possible.
Male, 31-45, Waterford (Player)

I miss the days of letting the ball do the work. Far more exciting game to watch and play. Also, this roaming Goalkeeper concept is having a negative impact on the game and in my opinion negatively influencing juveniles to copy them.
Male, 31-45, Louth (Coach/Manager)

Maybe it's my age but I loved the long kick and the high ball catch. I loved the skill of a good long foot pass taking out a few of the opposition players. It's called football not hand pass ball. Through the hands is all you hear from the coaches nowadays not a fan. I don't like the short kick out and I don't like the goalie coming out all the time.
Male, 46-60, Mayo (Supporter)

Senior intercounty football from 1990 - 2010 was excellent, this is the type of game we need to revert to. Words cannot describe how bad the current game is.
Male, 31-45, Down (Supporter)

6.9 OFFICIATING THE GAME (INCLUDING PENALTY SHOOT OUTS)



Rules
Referees
 Time Kicking
 Foul Cynical
 Black Card
 Consistency
 No Penalty Shoot Outs
 Mark
 Tackle Bias

Good games, bad games. Good players, bad players. Good refs, bad refs. These all will always be part of our sport. What I would like to see less of is inconsistencies in officiating and rule setting.
Male, 21-30, Kildare (Player)

We have a great game. Referees are human. Let's help them. Give the 4th official a bigger role".
Male, 31-45, Carlow (Player)

As a referee you need to try and help referees, not make the job more difficult. The GAA and County Boards need to invest in looking after and retaining referees and not disrespecting them like most County Boards do. Tinkering with rules is one thing but maybe spend more time on developing referees and then maybe the rules will be applied in the way they should be. Keep the game simple and stop adding rules.
Male, 31-45, Kildare (Referee)

Referees are human there are going to be inconsistencies.
Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Referee)

Everyone in the GAA wants a high standard of refereeing, everyone gives out about it, across all codes making new rules makes it harder for referees so the standard will be the same or poor so why not make it easier for referees so the standard improves and helps the game tenfold and make it attractive to potential new refs at the same time, this focus group is overthinking and making it harder to ref.
Male, 31-45, Provincial Council of Britain (Referee)

There was a considerable focus on the actual process of officiating on match day. For a long time, the working title of this section had been 'refereeing' given the large volume of material focussing on (poor) refereeing. However, there were other issues raised, and these are detailed next.

There were a substantial number of sub-themes in this area, however, by some distance, the greatest number of comments centred on perceived refereeing inconsistency. Some went as far as to suggest that refereeing consistency was 'ruining the game'. It was suggested that inconsistency was rife within games (same referee), across games (different referees), and across grades (suggested lower 'standard' of refereeing). The consistency argument was often linked to bias and fairness, and for some, this was particularly acute at underage level. Some of the comments bordered on disparaging, but the majority were critical, offering an alternative to current practices.

At club level in particular, referees are very susceptible to bias. Whether it be against a particular player or a team in general, it can be very blatant and against the spirit of the game and sport in general.
Male, 21-30, Armagh (Player)

Inconsistent refereeing. Tackling is a big grey area for everyone I think, especially when it's a group tackle. It seems to always favour a group of defenders turning over a forward. A group of forwards that swarm a back will almost always give a free out, for the same tackle.
Male, 21-30, Dublin (Player)

Consistent clear refereeing without obvious bias is needed.

Female, 31-45, Dublin (Supporter)

Better and more consistent refereeing would help for more free-flowing games but it needs to start with the referee and his/her officials. At the moment we see too much inconsistency with different decisions from referees for the same offence.

Male, 61+, Mayo (Supporter)

There's a serious lack of consistency in the implementation of rules of the game from underage to senior. We'd be better placed with one referee and 2 supporting referees on the field rather than linesmen. The tackle needs to be clearly defined, coached and implemented.

Male, 31-45, Donegal (Coach/Manager)

While refereeing (inconsistency or at least negativity towards) was still the primary focus of the submissions, there was a sizeable number who were sympathetic to referees. The increased speed and physicality of 'modern' football were cited as reasons why refereeing the game today is increasingly difficult. There were therefore calls for the referee to receive more help, either by means of an additional referee, or the use of video technology.

[It is] impossible for 1 referee to manage the modern game at inter-county level.

Male, 46-60, Meath (Supporter)

"[We need] 2 referees and a VAR-like system introduced to review controversial decisions.

Female, 31-45, Armagh (Coach/Manager)

Two referees at inter-county and club championship level games.

Male, 31-45, Armagh (Player)

Trial of TMO, referees need assistance. The game is moving much faster now.

Male, 31-45, Cavan (Coach/Manager)

The speed of today's games necessitates additional refereeing aids. A ref in each half should be trialled in next year's O'Byrne cup etc. competitions.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Club matches (especially league) require more than one official, loads of off the ball incidents occurring and 'nobody' sees it.

Male, 46-60, Cavan (Coach/Manager)

There was some enthusiasm for a shot clock. It was argued that this would 'speed up' the game and would facilitate a more attacking form of football. In addition to a shot clock specifically, there were also calls for a countdown timer for the game (as in Ladies Gaelic football) and for this to be stopped where appropriate, in order to eliminate deliberate time wasting. There were relatively few specific parameters suggested for the shot clock, with a few suggesting minor variations in its use, for example, commencement at the halfway, '65, or '45, and a one-minute duration suggested (shot to happen within one minute of its commencement).

The clock should count down and only be stopped when there is an injury. This would cut out speculation on how many minutes should be awarded when full time is up. Definitely needed for future games.

Female, 31-45, Armagh (Supporter)

A countdown timer, so the right amount of time is played. One less thing for the referee to worry about. If teams try to kill time, they won't be able to.

Female, 31-45, Galway (Supporter)

I strongly encourage switching the clock system from the current 'counting up' style to the 'count down' and stopping system used in LGFA. This will make game interruptions and additional time a lot more transparent and have the positive effect of allowing the black card sin bin to have its full intended effect. Especially as a referee, I would find this a lot easier to use and I know there would be full transparency with stoppages, for example. We would have less deliberate delays of play. I see no reason why this should not be introduced. I only see positive outcomes.

Male, 21-30, Europe (Referee)

There was some concern expressed concerning the refereeing of ball possession, and over-carrying of the ball, in particular. There were calls for either a stricter implementation of the four steps rule or calls to increase the number of steps legally permitted in the absence of enforcement.

Either increase the steps to 6 or 8 or enforce the four steps rule.

Male, 31-45, Fermanagh (Player)

Consistent enforcement of overcarrying, leading to more contests, tackles on the ball (while being played) & turnovers, which would inevitably lead to teams wanting to avoid being caught in possession, and getting into opposition territory quickly.

Male, 31-45, Roscommon (Referee)

If the referees actually insisted on four steps it would solve a huge number of ills in the game. Possession would be moved/turned over etc. As it is at the moment it is so easy to break the line, one v one. I'm 36 and at senior club I find it so easy to break a one-on-one tackle because I have 6/7 steps to run past a man between plays. It's impossible for a defender one v one [when it is like that]. When I first started playing refs were stricter on steps and the ball had to be moved on as a result.

Male, 31-45, Galway (Player)

The refereeing of the tackle was a cause of concern. While ‘tackling’ has a section of its own, these responses were directly related to the officiating of games. Particular issues concerned the numbers of people allowed to tackle an opponent, the technical nature of the tackle, and the different interpretations of a tackle depending on pitch location (forwards or backs).

I am an underage county player. From my view of the type of game make the referees job easier so they be more consistent. Define a tackle.

Male, u17, Donegal (Player)

When I played in the mid-90s, the rule was one man tackles only, and with one hand at a time. Any more, and it was a free to the player in possession. Referees just need to be told how to interpret the tackle correctly and overnight the swarm blight goes away, and the game becomes infinitely more exciting for both players and spectators.

Male, 31-45, Dublin (Supporter)

Penalise swarm tackling. Give an opportunity to see more player-on-player encounters, in turn promoting more athleticism and skill.

Male, 31-45, Asia (Supporter)

Referees have different versions of the ‘hand in’ for example in the tackle. I feel unless its reckless more leniency should be given to the tackling player. More clarity on it also.

Male, 46-60, Armagh (Supporter)

Define the tackle. As a past player, I find it frustrating.

Male, 61+, Meath (Supporter)

Define the tackle. Entirely in the eye of the beholder at moment. Routinely Gaelic now handing off the incoming player before an attempt to play ball (stop and strip). It is a foul (any of 5.3, 5.5, 5.8) but is ubiquitous so rarely penalised. Similarly, any player running past an opponent off the ball expects to be pulled back (shirt, arm) to prevent them getting to pre-set up positions. Referee usually can't see. No definitions cause variations in referee approach. Let it go versus whistle happy. Pitch has shrunk by increased athleticism of players. Hard for refs to keep up.

Male, 46-60, Antrim (Coach/Manager)

The refereeing of situations where players feign injury was another topic raised within this theme. The calls were essentially for such players to be sanctioned, meaning that officials would necessarily have to be stricter on what was essentially described as a time-wasting strategy.

Players feigning injury to be sanctioned. Players who purposely get an opponent sent off should also be red carded.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Supporter)

Proven feigning of injury should also result in lengthy suspensions.

Male, 46-60, Armagh (Supporter)

Eradication of cynical play and players going to ground holding their face/head when clearly not injured. Any player holding their face/head should be sent for a 10-minute head injury assessment. This would soon cut it out.

Male, 31-45, Kildare (Supporter)

In addition to referees, there was some discussion of the role and ability of umpires. From bland calls for ‘better referees and umpires’, to more specific suggestions, including a minimum qualification for umpiring. For example, it was suggested that in order to qualify as an umpire at inter-county level, it should be mandatory to be a referee at club level.

Better refs and umpires.

Male, 46-60, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

With umpires who are educated on the rules of the game.

Male, u17, Dublin (Supporter)

We need to encourage open play and to support referees more. Can we give additional responsibilities to umpires and lines people so that they can support the referee more? Very often the umpires give the appearance of struggling to even confirm a score.

Male, 46-60, Roscommon (Administrator)

Mandatory for referees to have linesmen and umpires.

Male, 17-20, Mayo (Player)

The refereeing of cynical play was a much-discussed issue, probably second only to refereeing inconsistency. There was a feeling that the black card both made it more difficult for referees, and was administered recklessly, or inconsistently. Suggestions included including a mandatory penalty (or a 13 or 20 metre free) for a black card, no matter where it was given on the pitch with the logic being that it should hurt a team directly on the scoreboard.

In a 3-point or even a 4-point game with a minute to go, countless times we see black cards been taken by teams when the jeopardy of a game is at its highest. Teams are indirectly rewarded for foul play. This is wrong and ruins the spectacle of the game, in situations where it could produce moments that last generations.

Male, 31-45, Louth (Coach/Manager)

Cynical fouling is the biggest issue and needs to have a rule to really punish this aspect of the game at all levels.

Male, 46-60, Galway (Coach/Manager)

Referee should be allowed to give a black card for any foul that he/she deems is cynical i.e. denying a breakaway or a clear scoring opportunity. Teams are consistently cynically fouling but not tripping or pulling down so technically these aren't black card offences.

Male, 31-45, Fermanagh (Player)

There were a few other issues raised, and these are illustrated by way of sample quotes below. The issues included intentional or unintentional referee bias, mutual respect between referees and players/staff, a rugby-like scenario where only the captain can verbally engage with the referee, the need for investment in referee development, the opportunity for referees to explain their decisions (again akin to rugby).

Referees deserve respect but should also respect players, medical teams and coaches.

Male, 46-60, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

Also support enhanced referee programme. Need invest in Refs. Better pay & conditions. 2 refs per game. Then refs will be of higher standard, and better respected & more will be involved.

Male, 46-60, Armagh (Supporter)

Would like to see referees show a lot more respect towards players/managers, too many think they are untouchable.

Male, 46-60, Armagh (Administrator)

One thing I would love to see is referees being able to explain decisions. I once wrongly received a yellow for getting hit off the ball without provoking it. The ref did not see this. He gave 2 yellow cards. I asked, 'why have I been booked?' and he refused to answer.

Male, 21-30, Mayo (Player)

I would like games played fairly, I honestly have never seen such biased refereeing in all my life, if a ref doesn't like a club which he/she refs they make it known on the pitch, sorry to go hard on the refs, but it's the only thing that annoys me about Gaelic football.

Female, 46-60, Monaghan (Supporter)

There were calls for an end to games being decided using penalty shootouts. Alternative suggestions included replays, a 'next score the winner' scenario, extra time and/or a replay, or the taking of free kicks or '45s. There were some mentions of the negative impact on player mental health, and particularly the mental health of younger players.

One where the outcome is not decided by penalties on the day, as witnessed at the Armagh/Donegal episode. Neither team was truly happy at the end.

Male, 61+, Armagh (Supporter)

Totally disagree with finals being decided by penalties. This is a 'soccer answer' to decide a winner in Gaelic we always had a replay and extra-time.

Female, 46-60, Donegal (Supporter)

In the case of extra time there should be no penalty shoot outs especially at underage level. I have witnessed 3 of these first hand in the past year and the mental health effects on young people if they miss are shocking. It's not an appropriate end for a GAA match.

Female, 46-60, Female (Coach/Manager)

6.10 REWARD SKILL OR RISK-TAKING



Skills
Football
Attacking
Passing
Scoring
Catching
Reward
Open
Bravery
Points
Coaching Style
Kicking Ball
Risk
Teams
Gym

A fit, bulked up runner now can make an inter county player... no skills required.
Male, 31-45, Sligo (Supporter)

Football is a fantastic game to watch and play once the skills are displayed. When I grew up, you had to practice. Apart from the top counties, any 'athlete' can play because most are now trained to hand pass once they get the ball... sweepers are a scourge to the game and basically provide a hiding place for players who cannot defend.
Male, 46-60, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

I am not one to harken back to a day, that in my view, never really existed, of long kicking, high fielding etc. but I do want to see skill being rewarded. The game, at inter county and increasingly club level, has put a premium on players who can run at the expense of those who can play. We have to reward skill, how we do that, I'm not sure.
Male, 46-60, Longford (Coach/Manager)

A game in which players are forced to exhibit the majority of the skills associated with the game. That players will end up having to be good at kicking, catching, defending one vs one etc. Not just being fit and able to hand-pass the ball and break lines.
Male, 17-20, Longford (Player)

There were a substantial number of submissions which focussed on the importance of rewarding skill and/or risk-taking. These submissions were on a spectrum from rewarding complete gung-ho football, to rewarding skill or bravery, but in the context of breaking down tactical negativity. One of the main sub-themes in these submissions was the contrast between skilled footballers and so-called 'athletes', and the criticism that, to be a county footballer requires fitness and strength, rather than skill and nous.

A game that allows players to express their skills more openly. Not built for players who excel in the gym, for example. More skilful players need to be able to stand out.
Male, 21-30, Dublin (Player)

Attacking football that rewards the skilful footballer, rather than the strength and conditioning warriors. Finding the balance between chaos and good tactical structures.
Male, 17-20, Sligo (Supporter)

A game that encourages development of the main skills like kick passing, high fielding, 1 v 1 battles, shooting and skills like dummies, and hops to evade players. A game that rewards footballers, true footballers. Right now, if you want to be a good player you've to be a good athlete, the basic skills (kicking etc.) need to be the most important thing". Emphasis on skills over athleticism, the smaller player is being overlooked especially at club level because of an over emphasis on strength and endurance.
Male, 31-45, Limerick (Supporter)

Focus needs to be given to allow individual skills and creativity to be shown and seen. Colm Cooper, Maurice Fitzgerald, Ciaran McDonald, Peter Canavan would not make any modern-day county football team - the current style used means we are losing the future iterations of these players. That is evident already at underage levels.
Male, 31-45, Carlow (Player)

In terms of the risk element, there was a feeling that players are almost over-coached, playing to tight team systems, and almost afraid to make a mistake, or take a chance. It was felt that this approach to play makes the multitude of 'safe' handpasses 'almost inevitable'. There was the often-stated hope that teams would play with a greater degree of aggression and positivity, both in defence and in attack. This stands in contrast to the much-disliked focus on maintaining possession, and overall fear of losing.

A game that rewards risk. A game where players aren't playing with fear of making a mistake, rather playing with freedom.
Male, 31-45, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

A more exciting game with more risks taken. Players have less fear about mistakes and try new things that they are capable of. Especially at senior inter county where players can do things for their club but wouldn't try it for their county such as long-range shooting.
Male, 17-20, Tyrone (Player)

Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a fair degree of overlap between responses in this thematic area, and secondary points made about issues including man-on-man attacking, and use of the ball in terms of long-range and/or diagonal kicking. Additionally, there was a view that the game of football should be won by doing things positively and well, as opposed to principally stifling other teams from doing things well.

As a player we have become programmed to avoid risks of almost any kind. I would like to see a game that encourages and rewards risk.

Male, 21-30, Westmeath (Player)

County football should consist of strong attacking football, high intensity, with a significant emphasis on skilled players, who can express their ability. Not manufactured footballers who follow manager demands to the letter. Club football will follow suit!

Male, 31-45, Armagh (Player)

There were submissions which questioned coaching methodologies, including those employed with underage teams, suggesting that the overly negative style of play (suggested to be evident) is, in part, because of managers wanting to safeguard their reputations (by not losing games). In addition, there was a feeling that coaches taking juvenile teams are not teaching the basic skill of especially tackling, kicking off the ground, kicking instead of hand passing, and instead are opting to teach ball possession and retention.

I help with an u13 team - last year at u12, we came up against a team with two sweepers! - at u12!

Male, 46-60, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

Rewards for catching, and kicking is a must to change the coaching mindset and tactics.

Male, 46-60, Cork (Coach/Manager)

I would like to see less S & C in underage players, especially at club level, and more emphasis on skills and understanding the game".

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Gaelic football as it used to be played with far more emphasis on the basic skills such as high fielding, foot passing and shots at goal. There should be far less emphasis (and far less money spent) on the type of professional management, strength and conditioning, statistics etc introduced in recent times. The players are amateurs, not professionals".

Male, 61+, Cork (Supporter)

Although they were keen to see skill and risk-taking rewarded, there was a sub-cohort of participants who appeared realistic about the fact that 'the genie was out of the bottle' in terms of things like conditioning and analysis, but that the overall game needed a 'better balance' between these aspects, and the reward for skilful play. Essentially that the pendulum has swung too much in favour of strength and safety, and that a recalibration, to reward skill, needs to take place. In this theme there were several suggestions for the rewarding of shooting from 'further out' (and therefore involving both skill and risk), with more than the current, one point.

I like to see a game where individual skills are given a chance to flourish while still recognising that it's a team game and that good team play can overcome superior individual players - a balanced game.

Male, 46-60, Longford (Supporter)

Reward more risk taking from attacking players. Like 2 points for a kick from play kicked from outside a 40-metre arc around the goal.

Male, 46-60, Meath (Supporter)

I think the relentless running athletic game that Gaelic football has become risks excluding many talented, skilful players who may not have the innate athletic ability to participate. In the past there was more opportunities within our games for the skilful, smart player. Now only the athletic freaks can make it to the top table.

Male, 31-45, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

In addition to the additional value of a longer-range point, there were also calls for the value of a goal to be increased. Here, the logic was that a higher value goal would encourage teams to engage in faster, more attacking football.

I want to see the core skills (i.e., catching and kicking) being the dominant features of Gaelic football. The huge elephant in the room preventing this is the monotonous continuing slap hand passing which is soulless and skill-less and causes bunching and hence discourages the core skills. Please remove it or at least curtail it. We will then be able to witness the joy which are catching and kick passing, the more pleasing aspects of our game, as the 'founders' intended.

Male, 61+, Offaly (Supporter)

More rewards for scores to encourage teams to shoot... nothing wrong with tactics and defending so long as the reward for scores is greater.

Male, 21-30, Roscommon (Player)

It's too easy to maintain possession in Gaelic football - it doesn't stress-test a player's skills. We should incentivise risk-taking with the ball, incentivise players to play with conviction, increase the number of shots on goal, decrease the amount of time possessions last... good luck to you all!

Male, 31-45, Galway (Player)

Below are a few additional comments that give a broader context to the totality of submissions under this theme.

Should be more a game for skilful players and play is rewarded, kicking, catching, soloing, hand passing, and forward play should be encouraged. The fundamental skills we coach at underage are not being rewarded at senior level where it has become more like soccer passing back and forward side to side and probing to find an opening.
Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Coach/Manager)

The game should reward innovation and risk taking, remove some of the historic markings on the field and provide 4 points for a goal and 2 points for a score kicked outside an arc (current scoring zone).
Male, 31-45, Kildare (Coach/Manager)

The problem is that the reward for attacking play and scoring is not great enough, therefore coaches revert to ultra defensive tactics as a means to 'stay in' games.
Male, 31-45, Fermanagh (Coach/Manager)

The bottom line is I would rather go to an U16 club game than an elite game between two intercounty sides. It's a bizarre case for any sport but the facts are, the U16 game will offer more scores, more risk taking, more individual moments of brilliance, more mistakes, more kicking, more shots, more excitement, more entertainment. The massed defence and possession game is stifling creativity and killing the game.
Male, 46-60, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

The raw skills and wow-factor has been diminished with the overemphasis on stats, PBs in the gym and clinical analysis. The new rules are tipping the scales back in the favour of the natural ballers which can only be a positive thing. I'd love to see the game become more free-flowing and attack-minded.
Female, 21-30, Roscommon (Supporter)

6.11 SCORING



There was a substantial amount of commentary on amendments to the scoring system. Of note, the majority of these were in what could be termed 'multiple issue' submissions. However, some were also presented as single-issue submissions. There was a great variety in the proposals, including: (i) 2 points for a free kick score; (ii) 2 points for a free taken from the ground; (iii) 2 points for scores from outside the '45; (iv) 2 points for scores from outside a 30 metre zone; 2 points for a converted sideline kick; (v) 3 points for a goal scored by foot strike and only 2 for one scored by palming the ball into the net; (vi) 4 points for a goal; (vii) 5 points for a goal. In addition to these specific amendments, there was disdain expressed for the palmed goal.

Kicking points from range should be rewarded as teams will continue to pack defences. Longer distances scores should be awarded a higher score, say 2 points.
Male, 46-60, Dublin (Administrator)

Like the idea of the new rules to include 4 points for a goal, and 2 points for a long-distance score.
Male, 17-20, Donegal (Player)

Like the new proposals! Scoring will increase. Give consideration to awarding 2 points for a tactical (not technical) foul inside the arc. A modest lead could easily be defended in the closing minutes by deliberately fouling inside the arc ensuring no 2 or 4-point opportunities arise.
Male, 46-60, Donegal (Coach/Manager)

I'd like the players to take more risks in attempting scores even from outside the 45-metre line and more emphasis on forward passes especially kick passes and also, I would like to see the mark abolished altogether.
Male, 31-45, Mayo (Supporter)

Take away the forward mark and instead give 4 points for a goal if the ball is kicked from outside the 45m line and won by an attacking player. This would lead to more players going for goals.
Male, 46-60, Kildare (Coach/Manager)

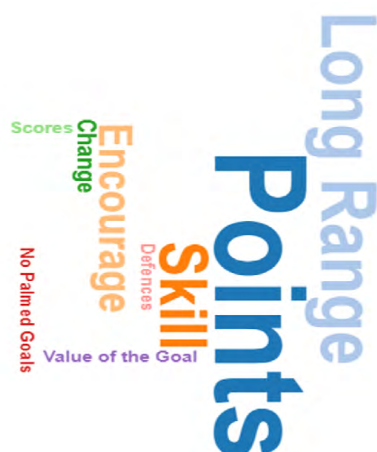
Scores from significant range are worth more points (2 points).
Male, 31-45, Europe (Coach/Manager)

The hand pass for a goal was abolished over 30 years ago, but I believe the phenomenon of slapping the ball into the net is something that needs to be disallowed. There is no skill to it whatsoever, and a big proportion of goals are now scored that way, where a Player A will run through and pass the ball sideways to Player B to slap it in. It seems like a gimme. Only goals scored with the foot should be permitted.
Male, 31-45, Westmeath (Player)

While the vast majority of comments suggested that scores from further out the pitch should be rewarded more than those close-in, not all participants believed this to be the case.

*Players shouldn't be rewarded with 2 points just by being able to kick a ball from 33m out.
Male, 21-30, Roscommon (Supporter)*

6.12 STRUCTURES



*An rud is práinní domsa ná go bhfuil na Cúigí ag fáil báis toisc go bhfuil an bearna, ag méadú idir na foirne is láidre agus na foirne is laige.
Fear, 31-45, Áth Cliath (Imreoir)*

*I think after the group games in the Tailteann Cup, the top 8 go into quarter finals and the bottom 3 go into a 3rd tier competition.
Male, 31-45, Kildare (Player)*

There was a series of submissions collectively viewed as issues related to 'structures' within the game. The first of these concerned calls for a further 'tier' in the football championship, a so-called '3rd Tier'. This was driven by a feeling that the gap between the top and bottom teams in the Tailteann Cup was still too great. There was a feeling that a lot of the ills in football relate to mismatches between teams, essentially necessitating teams to set up negatively 'to avoid getting hammerings.' The converse of this is that there was a feeling that when teams were relatively evenly matched, there was very little wrong with the game (overall), and specific games in particular.

*There is little wrong with the game when the teams are evenly matched, it's not the fault of the stronger teams when there is a mismatch. The top teams are playing some of the best football of all time, conditioned incredibly and the skill levels are at an all-time high. The problems arise when there is a mismatch, and the tiered championship has sort of taken care of that. The problem is that the competitions have been balanced out, but now crammed into too short of a time period, hence all the injuries.
Male, 31-45, Monaghan (Coach/Manager)*

*The changes to football are mainly required at a competitions level. e.g. there are too many mismatches and dead rubbers at provincial level. It is high time for the same senior/intermediate/junior grading that serves club football so well be applied to intercounty competition.
Male, 31-45, Meath (Player)*

*It's not the game totally needing changes, it's structures. Provincials with unequal teams lead to defensive football. This doesn't happen as much in league or latter championship as teams are matched.
Male, 31-45, Fermanagh (Coach/Manager)*

*I think some of the dislikes in Gaelic football stem from the mismatches created at championship level. Teams must play negatively to compete and have to practice that negativity during the year. There were very few "negative" games in the Tailteann cup last year.
Male, 21-30, Meath (Player)*



These were some submissions related to the fixture scheduling, and the nature of some competitions. These were related to issues such as player burnout, game scheduling and venues, the condensed (or protracted, depending on point of view) nature of championship, player load, timing of competitions, and a linking of league results to championship seedings or fixtures. These are broadly summarised in the quotes below.

[It is] just my opinion, if the National League divisions are split in two you could reduce the number of games, and space the games fortnightly to keep the split season, while giving teams the chance rather than out two weeks in a row and off for one. Massive overload on players.
Male, 31-45, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

The GAA needs to look at the season again. Playing hurling and football week after week is causing clubs to prioritise one code over another. It's not working.
Male, 46-60, Cork (Administrator)

The season is far too condensed, and I'd like to see smaller counties getting a better chance to play games.
Female, u17, Dublin (Supporter)

The inter-county championship is too short. Too many games happen at the same time and the fixtures are not set far enough in advance to plan to attend.
Male, 46-60, Mayo (Supporter)

The GAA is losing supporters by the thousands with protracted competitions, the championship is ridiculous now, no jeopardy. Armagh could lose their first match in Ulster, lose two in the group stages and still be in a Preliminary Quarter Final, it is sucking the life and money out of folk.
Male, 46-60, Armagh (Supporter)

To give the game the best chance of flourishing, have provincial leagues in December - start National leagues in early January and finish on St. Patrick's Day. A uniform Club championship - group stages mid-March to mid-May - Provincial Championship and All-Ireland series mid-May to mid-September - Club championship knockouts end of August to early October. Club and County players all happy - just a tweaking of the current calendar - still a split season of sorts.
Male, 46-60, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

There were smaller overall numbers of comments regarding issues such as the tension between club and county (availability of 'county' players for their clubs), a greater involvement of 'Croke Park' in club fixturing within counties (promote non-elite level of play) fixturing in general, and a more deliberate effort to get club football 'caught up' with inter-county, both technically and tactically.

I would like to see county set ups both senior and development squads let their player's play club football. Although county boards say "we are not stopping them playing" it's more than obvious that county managers are telling players not to play with their clubs. and players are afraid of county managers".
Male, 46-60, Leitrim (Coach/Manager)

There were a number of comments on underage football (need to specifically focus on the development of ALL underage players; and have school age grades [e.g., u13.5 or 14.5 etc.] that better facilitate player development), and this was a particularly important issue in so-called 'weaker counties', where it was suggested that the game needs to be addressed 'from the ground up'. Relatedly, there was some mention about the importance of helping so-called 'smaller clubs' in terms of the development of facilities and infrastructure.



6.13 TACKLING



A clearly defined tackle. Current definition states that the tackle must be aimed at the ball, not the player. A swarm tackle is not defined and is not tackling for the ball. It results in illegal physical contact with the player in possession but the player in possession is frequently penalised.

Male, 61+, Dublin (Administrator)

The tackle needs definition - 90% of tackles seem to fall outside 'shoulder to shoulder charge' and tackling the ball.

Male, 31-45, Dublin (Player)

GAA rule does not allow for tackling of the player except shoulder to shoulder, it's on the ball, when is that rule ever applied? The tackle is one of the biggest issues within our game and I hope this committee take an in depth look at it.

Male, 61+, Leitrim (Administrator)

I think not having a proper defined tackle. This leads to inconsistent refereeing. This is the 1st thing that needs to be addressed. Then you can define what a tactical foul is. It's ruining free flowing moves and slowing the game down. I would like to see the black card and tactical fouls combined together with a free on the top of the semi-circle for the team in possession. Hurting teams on the score board only way to stamp it out.

Male, 31-45, Mayo (Administrator)

There was a relatively large volume of negative material submitted concerning cynical play, with many calling for a zero-tolerance policy towards tackling of this kind. However, there was also the reality that because 'everyone is doing it', that it is almost necessary to have it, or coach it, as part of team play. Cynical play involved cynical tackling, but also players pretending to be injured, or deliberately wasting time.

While I dislike cynical and tactical fouling as a coach, I would be naive not to coach it in the current evolution of the game.

Male, 31-45, Kerry (Coach/Manager)

Come down heavy on cheaters, feigning injury, and time wasters.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

I would like to see stricter enforcement of steps and tackle rules. Shoulder to shoulder contact is technically the only physical contact allowed. After that only ball pressure should be allowed. But we see constant holding and dragging, grappling, gripping of the arms and constant coming in over the shoulder from behind and using body weight to check a player's momentum, all in the guise of 'going for the ball'. This takes away from the traditional skills of the game and encourages players and coaches to focus on upper body strength and size more so than speed and skill.

Male, 46-60, Cavan (Supporter)

Cynical fouls must lead to instant dismissal from the game as they influence the outcome of the game. - not just a black card/sinbin - but total dismissal from the game. This should lead to a faster more open game of football.

Male, 46-60, Clare (Administrator)

There were widespread calls for a clear definition of the tackle, and for rules around this to be implemented consistently across all levels of the game. Relatedly, and often in this context, there were calls for the introduction of a second referee, or additional supports for the referee, in order to help monitor the tackle, and to eradicate cynical play from the game.

I'd like to see the tackle easily defined.

Male, 46-60, Armagh (Supporter)

Main gripe with the game is the tackle not defined and there is inconsistency between referees. In a swarm tackle, what is the player with the ball supposed to do? Should be limited to 2 players max allowed to tackle.

Male, 31-45, Donegal (Supporter)

Main change I would like to see is more definition of 'tackle', so it is easier to coach. In 2-man tackle, must there not always be something the tackled player can do to break the tackle? It appears that if held by 2 players the tackled player will be blown for over holding.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Despite the relatively large volume of calls for tighter monitoring of cynical play and tackling, some submissions struck a slightly different tone, suggesting that the 'aggressive' tackling in the modern game brought energy to the game, and helped speed the game up by necessitating ball release by the opponent. There were also calls for 'hard and fair' tackles to be both allowed and welcomed as part of the game.

Group tackling shows good teamwork and should not be discouraged. It also encourages the ball carrying player to move/release the ball more quickly, thus improving the speed/intensity of the game.

Male, 31-45, Meath (Player)

Hard tackles and let the game flow.

Male, 17-20, Kerry (Player)

I would like a fast-moving hard-hitting game. I feel the physicality is gone out of it where players can play on the edge and that there are good challenges and some hits. Look at the hits in hurling, yes sometimes refs get it wrong, but this is what adds to the atmosphere and the excitement of games which is what fans & players want. I feel football is gone too monotonous and that's what kills the excitement. The best games now are the ones that are on the edge where the ref is seen to let a little bit go rather than give soft frees.

Male, 21-30, Meath (Player)

In terms of the precise actions of tackling, there were submissions on the importance of allowing only one on one tackling, the importance of coaching 'near hand' and single-handed tackling properly, questioning about the legitimacy of tackling a player while he is off his feet, and the close monitoring of tackling 'shoulder to shoulder'.

Only one player allowed to tackle player in possession.

Male, 31-45, Derry (Administrator)

It used to be that the tackle was shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip. Over the years a single-handed tackle near handed tackle...pushing with one hand has emerged. If it is to be allowed, it should be one to one only.

Male, 61+, Kilkenny (Administrator)

I think it should be a foul to tackle a player who is not on his feet. This would help with the 'swarm' tackling issue.

Male, 31-45, Tyrone (Coach/Manager)

[I would say] a player in possession of the ball, who falls or is illegally brought to the ground, may not be tackled, but he must play the ball away without delay either along the ground with the hand or foot or a legal hand or kick pass. He may not regain possession of the ball until he is standing in an upright position.

Male, 61+, Dublin (Referee)

The issue of one-to-one tackling alluded to immediately above drew quite a bit of commentary, as did the issue of actually tackling the ball, and not the player.

Look at an option where only one person can tackle the player on the ball. I understand that a team can organise to have backup tacklers, but it may give the player on the ball more time to pass/shoot etc.

Meath, 46-60, Meath (Administrator)

More emphasis on individual tackling such as shoulder to shoulder, frontal block and particularly the near hand tackle which is almost non-existent anymore rather than physical force and multiple players tackling at one.

Male, 46-60, Wicklow (Coach/Manager)

One aspect I strongly dislike is when a player on the team not in possession pushes a runner off the ball to stop their momentum running forward and it is never punished.

Male, 31-45, Cork (Supporter)



6.14 THE MARK



There is nothing wrong with the game at the moment, except the forward mark as it's awful... If the forward mark is to stay, I hope not, it should be changed so that if the mark isn't taken, they should be allowed to be tackled immediately, it's too much of a reward for what is usually a simple catch. I wouldn't mind the forward mark being from a kick outside the 45 and caught inside the 21.

Male, 21-30, Derry (Supporter)

I don't see why there is such negativity about the advanced mark rule when it clearly encouraged kicking and catching.

Male, 31-45, Mayo (Coach/Manager)

If you don't abandon the advance mark, at least make it as was originally intended - from outside the 45m line to inside the 20m line.

Male, 61+, Derry (Coach/Manager)

Among those who focussed on 'the mark' in their responses, there was an almost universal desire to remove it from the game. This was particularly so in relation to the forward mark. However, there was also a minority who recommended or suggested changes to the specifics of the mark rules. It is no exaggeration to say that there was widespread disdain for the forward mark. Participants believed that it was in part responsible for the lack of one v one situations between attacking forwards and corner backs. For others, the benefit of the mark (a free shot at goal) was out of proportion with the skill required to gain a mark (catching the ball). For some participants, the mark was literally the only thing about football that they found objectionable.

Gaelic football doesn't in anyway need to be overhauled. We have a wonderful game and when it's played in a correct way we can have brilliant matches. One tweak I would make. Remove the advanced mark.

Male, 31-45, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Generally, I think inter-county football is in a good spot. I dislike the current version of the mark.

Male, 31-45, Dublin (Player)

Ba chóir fáil réidh leis an marc chun tosaigh. Níl an fiúntas céanna ag baint leis is atá leis an marc ó chiceanna amach. Moilleann sé an imirt gan fáth.

Fear, 46-60, Áth Cliath (Tacadóir)

Game doesn't need a massive overhaul. Need to speed up the play. Big thing is to get rid of the mark, it slows down the game with a man taking 20 seconds to take a shot rather than taking his man on.

Male, 21-30, Mayo (Player)

Elsewhere, while there was disdain for it, participants added a deeper explanation of, or context to that disdain, linking the mark to other elements of the game. Some of these are illustrated immediately below.

Absolutely detest the forward mark - it takes away the art of defending.

Male, 31-45, Derry (Coach/Manager)

As a defender, the forward mark has made playing a sweeper almost a necessity, against good teams. Instead of attack, it promotes negative tactics.

Male, 21-30, Kerry (Player)

Feel the game has become less exciting...the mark adds to this and defies any form of logic.

Male, 61+, Tyrone (Supporter)

First thing that needs to go is advanced mark. It is a high reward for a basic enough skill.

Male, 31-45, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Forward mark discourages forwards from taking on a defender. It slows the game down and will lead to the erosion of man on man defending.

Male, 46-60, Dublin (Coach/Manager)

Many of the comments related to the disproportionate nature of the skill (a so-called 'basic skill' of catching a ball) with essentially a free shot at the opposition goal. Additionally, there were many who equated it with a reduction in good and fast attacking forward play, an unfair advantage to forward players, or the elimination of attacking one on one battles.

Hate the forward mark. What advantage does a defender receive? It's madness we are start/stopping a game so forwards can benefit from a clean catch...let the forwards take on the defenders again and let the defenders showcase their skills/ability to stop the attackers.
Male, 31-45, Down (Administrator)

I don't like the attacking mark. I feel it slows the flow of the game and the game itself down. I was always taught to make a player work for their score.
Male, 31-45, Dublin (Supporter)

Remove the forward mark, as it only serves to worsen the blanket defence situation. A forward mark, especially caught in the chest or lower, is not a display of great Gaelic skills, however it offers a team an easy and uncontested scoring opportunity with little effort. To counter this teams are now flooding defence and the space to prevent an easy pass for a mark.
Male, 31-45, Armagh (Supporter)

I would like to see advanced mark gone from our game; it takes whole defensive part away. I was a forward and loved nothing more than winning my 50/50 ball and taking on my man for a score. Natural forwards are slowly being stripped from our game.
Male, 31-45, Galway (Coach/Manager)

There was a final constituency of participants who, while not particularly liking the mark, suggested particular circumstances in which it might work better, or to the development of a better spectacle of Gaelic football. In particular, there was a greater willingness to accept a mark from a long kickout (sometimes defined as a kick out going near or over the halfway line), a mark necessitating an overhead catch, or where the parameters of attacking were specific (for example where a ball comes from outside the '45 and into the '20 area).

Mark from kick outs and inside the 20m line only, or overhead. The mark is to give advantage for the art of high fielding.
Male, 31-45, Cavan (Player)

Abolish forward mark between 45m and 20m lines.
Male, 31-45, Down (Player)

Do away with the mark except for kick outs to the centre of the field.
Male, 61+, Dublin (Supporter)

I would like to see the attacking mark removed from the game or at least made into a genuine kick pass perhaps mark can only be called inside the '21 rather than inside the '45.
Male, 21-30, Derry (Supporter)

6.15 ADDITIONAL ISSUES

In addition to submissions on specific issues related to the game, there were a series of submissions categorised under the theme of 'comments or rants.' Essentially these were observations (lacking a specific recommendation) or rants or gripes either against the current 'style of play', or against officials (administrators or referees). Also, as previously alluded to, there were a substantial number of submissions listing multiple macro themes or areas to be considered. Often these were in the form of lists of issues that were suggested to be problematic. By way of transparency a few examples are given below.

I would change a few things...
 1 - Get rid of all marks. (They stop the flow of the game)
 2 - Give advantage to the ball carrier in a swarm tackle - to encourage more attackers to run at defences.
 3 - Combine intercounty league and championship (the league is by far the better format, it needs promoting). The 2 could be combined to shorten the season but creating a more competitive tournament.
 4 - Clock stops for injuries during black cards. Time wasting during black cards is a problem.
Male, 31-45, Derry (Supporter)

1) The attacking mark has to go, there are very little 1 v 1 contests between attacker and defender.
 2) Two referees for inter-county games, one in each half of the pitch.
 3) Referees to be accountable for and explain decisions to help the inconsistencies that are apparent currently.
 4) The tackle rule needs to be reviewed and made simple.
Male, 46-60, Fermanagh (Administrator)

CONCLUSIONS

This report describes the findings from an online survey administered and completed in Spring and Summer, 2024. It is for the author him- or herself to draw their own conclusions, based on the totality of information presented. From the results in the quantitative section of the report, a number of issues are apparent.

In the first instance, large proportions of participants report Gaelic football to be either good or very good, and conversely, relatively low proportions reported it to be either poor or very poor. It therefore seems that rather than a massive overhaul, tweaks to the current rules are needed.

There appears to be an effect for age (with proportions dissatisfied increasing with age), as well as what might be called an Ulster/Munster effect, where relatively high proportions from Ulster report satisfaction, with the reverse true for those from Munster. These findings merit further investigation, however, the survey coincided with a period of great footballing success at inter-county and schools' levels for teams from Ulster. This may go some way to explaining the positive responses from Ulster-based participants.

In terms of aspects of the game, it was apparent that players were a lot less dissatisfied than those self-reporting other roles in the world of Gaelic games.

Several themes (some overlapping) emerged from the thematic analyses. In general, these pointed to a desire for a faster, more attacking game, where risk and skill are rewarded on the scoreboard.

One strength of the findings is that they are based on a relatively large sample. However, a number of limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, all responses are self-reported, and it must be taken on trust that, for example, demographic information was accurately and truthfully reported. A second limitation centres on the iterative nature of the data collection process. Data collection took place over a long period wherein some emerging themes were publicised. It is possible that these emerging themes influenced subsequent participants to answer in the way that they did. By way of one example, there are multiple responses referencing the free-flowing style of play in the 'Dublin v Derry League Final'. Clearly anyone completing the survey in advance of that occasion would have done so without recourse to that particular game.





Appendix (iii) Report on Delphi Survey

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INTRODUCTION

The GAA Football Review Committee was established by Uachtarán Jarlath Burns, coming into operation following Congress 2024. The Committee is chaired by Jim Gavin and is composed of experienced team managers, coaches, players, and administrators.

This Football Review emanates from the Strategic Plan Aontas 2026, which in its vision statement described how the Association wishes 'to be a sustainable community-based and volunteer led association where as many as possible, participate in Gaelic games and culture, for as long as possible'.

Further, within the strategic plan, the vision description is 'Gaelic Games will be the most enjoyable amateur games in the world to play and watch'. Against this background, the Football Review Committee are seeking to analyse the current trends and characteristics of Gaelic football with a view to meeting the espoused vision.

Part of this review involves the collection and generation of data from various stakeholders to establish current perceptions on the game, as well as areas where the game may be enhanced.

Alongside other consultations engaged in by the committee, there have been two major research elements to the project. Firstly, a public online survey to gather widespread views on Gaelic football. This study is presented separately. Secondly, a Delphi Study which built upon the initial findings of the public online survey.

The Delphi technique is a well-established approach to answering research questions through the identification of a consensus view across subject experts. It allows for reflection among participants, who are able to nuance and reconsider their opinion based on the anonymised opinions of others. With careful and clear design though, Delphi studies can make a valuable contribution to the evidence base

by tapping into the profession's most precious resource—the knowledge and expertise of its practitioners.

This paper presents the methodology employed and the findings which arose from the three-round Delphi Study.

METHODS

This section outlines the methods employed within the Delphi Study. Initially, an overview of the Delphi Study design is presented, followed by a description of the expert panel. Subsequent sections concern the procedures involved in the Delphi Study and how the data were analysed.

STUDY DESIGN

The Delphi method has been described as "a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem". (Linstone and Turoff, 1975, p. 3). Within the Delphi method, a group of individuals deemed experts in a particular area provide their input on a topic through an iterative process to reach consensus on a particular topic or idea (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; McPherson et al., 2018). Some key elements of a Delphi study include the anonymity of the expert panel from each other and having multiple rounds of engagement with the panel. For many Delphi studies, the goal is to reach a level of consensus by the experts through the iterative process. The Delphi approach has been employed in sport research to reach consensus on Paralympic classification for sports such as judo (Krabben et al., 2019) and goalball (Martin et al., 2023), defining and characterizing organisational resilience in elite sport (Fasey et al., 2021), identifying injury risk factors for women playing rugby league (Scantlebury et al., 2022) and the most important non-game performance indicators from a coach perspective (Rogers et al., 2022).

EXPERT PANEL

Experts for this panel were deemed “experts by experience” (Law & Morrison, 2014; Seery et al., 2022). All experts involved in this study have had personal and/or professional experience with Gaelic football, as players, coaches, administrators, or match officials. In total, 135 designated experts were invited to contribute to the study, as per Table 1.

Category	No of Experts
Coach Developer Volunteer	28
Games Development Staff	27
Coach (Volunteer)	32t
Administrators	6
Match Officials	42
Total	135

Table 1: Categories (and numbers) of designated experts invited to take part in the Delphi Study.

Experts were recruited utilising Football Review Committee networks, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and contacting coaches, administrators, officials, or coach developers via email.

PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION

Before partaking in the study, individuals received a recruitment email with the details of the study, which included the number of rounds, nature of the study and a participation information sheet. This study comprised three rounds, utilising open-ended questions.

Each round was administered utilizing a web-based survey platform (Key Survey). Each participant received an email with detailed instructions for each round, including a timeline in which the round would be open to complete. Participants who did not complete the round by the final two days were sent a second reminder email. After the participants completed the round, the authors were given 5 days to analyse the data. Following data analysis, consultation with the FRC, and the creation of the subsequent survey, the authors sent out the next round with detailed instructions and the timeline.

For Round 1, the questions were designed based on the initial findings from the Football Review Survey. Firstly, the expert group were asked to identify specific actions (3) that they would introduce or reinforce to promote the two highest ranked technical skills from the public survey – Kicking Skills and Long-Range Kicking. The second section of the survey asked participants to consider the most disliked tactical element of Gaelic football, as identified by the public survey – Cynical Fouling. Participants were asked to identify three possible actions that they would introduce or reinforce to reduce cynical fouling.

Responses were in the form of open text, with participants provided the opportunity to outline their proposals as required. Participants received a link to the online survey via email and were provided with 7 days in which to complete the survey. Overall, 77 (57%) of the expert panel members responded within the given time frame, providing 693 potential areas for response (3 areas by 3 potential responses per respondent, with 77 completed responses).

Having discounted blank responses, or responses that indicated that the respondent had nothing further to add (e.g., N/A or nothing further), 585 responses were available for analysis.

For Round 2, the most prominent proposals identified in Round 1 related to Kicking, Long-Range Scoring, and Cynical Fouling were presented to the expert panel. There were three proposed actions identified for each of Kicking, Long-Range Scoring, and Cynical Fouling, for a total of 9 proposed actions. These were presented in the form of a quotation from one of the expert panel’s responses in Round 1. For example:

KICKING PROPOSAL 1:

“We need to create space in the attacking areas to reward a kick pass and increase the likelihood of successful completion. Limit the number of players allowed in their own half. Also means that there will be players in attacking half to receive a kick pass if turned over. Less players more space.”

In this round, the expert panel was asked to identify the strengths and challenges/unintended consequences of implementing the suggested action. Again, replies were sought in the form of free text quotations responses.

Again, the survey was circulated via email to the entire expert panel, with 64 complete responses provided. In this round, one incomplete response was received, but it was discounted. Given the survey structure in this round, there were 1,170 potential responses. Following discounting of incomplete, blank responses, or responses where it was clear that the respondent had nothing further to add (e.g., N/A), with a total of 1,023 valid responses for analysis.

For Round 3, a similar approach to Round 2 was undertaken, however, in this round, proposals received through consultations with Provincial/ County committees were circulated for consideration. In total, 5 proposals were circulated for feedback. The expert panel was asked to identify the strengths and challenges/unintended consequences of implementing the suggested action. Again, replies were sought in the form of free text quotations responses.

In this round, a total of 63 complete responses were received. There were 640 potential responses, with 616 responses available for analysis having discounted incomplete, blank responses, or responses where it was clear that the respondent had nothing further to add (e.g., N/A).

The attrition rate from Round 1 to Round 2 was 17%; from Round 2 to Round 3 was 1%, with an overall attrition rate of 18%. To manage attrition, the expert panel was clearly informed of the time commitment and iterative rounds of the study, and reminder emails were sent.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) to analyse the free text data. The analysis process began with immersion in the data, through reading and re-reading the responses. This thorough familiarisation phase was

crucial for understanding the nuances and context of the responses. Secondly, all submissions were allocated a 'macro' level thematic code. This was done by PH. These codes evolved as the process developed. These initial codes were subsequently allocated to a broad thematic code (umbrella code). Next, overarching themes were identified by grouping related umbrella codes. This iterative process involved refining themes to ensure they accurately represented the data.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings arising from the Delphi Study. Findings are presented initially related to the Round of the study within which they were received. As discussion of the findings of each round is incorporated into each section.

ROUND 1

In Round 1, the questions were designed based on the initial findings from the Football Review Survey, involving Kicking Skills, Long-Range Scoring, and Cynical Fouling, with respondents asked to identify three actions to promote or reduce the particular issue.

KICKING SKILLS

For many respondents, issues related to kicking skills were concerned with a perception of excessive handpassing. Respondents focussed on actions that would restrict the ability of teams to engage in multiple consecutive handpasses, such as:

"Limit number of consecutive handpasses"

However, there was less agreement among respondents about the nature of the limitations to be imposed. These varied from the complex:

"When a player receives a handpass in his own half of the field, outside the 21m line, he has to make a kick pass. A throw up where the infringement occurred if a team fails to comply."

"Would like to Trial that between the two 21-yard lines - no three consecutive hand passes - i.e. max 2 hand passes before ball is kicked - Penalty for more than two consecutive hand pass would be a free from when the third hand pass took place"

For others, a simpler proposal was put forward:

"2 handpasses has to be followed by a kick"

"No 2 consecutive handpasses"

LONG-RANGE SCORING

When asked to identify actions to promote Long-Range Scoring, there was a diverse range of responses related to the Scoring System, Coaching/Coach Development, with the Mark and the Shot Clock also prominent. For example, when discussing the scoring systems, respondents identified the introduction of an alternative scoring system for shots over the bar from distance. This was generally to award two points, though the distance recommended varied:

"Introduction of a 2-point line (an arc 40m from the goal) would incentivise long range shooting. Any point scored from outside the line awarded two

points. Would probably have to be accompanied by a move to 4 points for a goal to avoid unintended consequence of reducing goal attempts. It would not add an undue additional burden on referees and should be possible to implement universally (across all levels)."

"Reward a longer kick – 2 points for a point outside 45"

"Award two points for a score kicked from play, outside the 45m line"

The introduction of a shot clock was a popular response from the expert group. It was thought that by restricting the amount of time that a team has before shooting, that longer range shots might be more regular.

"A shot clock once you enter the opponent's half or a defined zone, e.g. inside the 65"

"Introducing a shot clock at intercounty level. All County grounds have clock displays. If an offensive team cross the 45-metre line, they have 25 seconds to score. If return past the 45-metre line this results in a turnover for the defensive team. If go beyond 25 seconds, ball is turnover for defensive team. Encourage long range scoring shots if running short of time."

"Countdown clock. E.g. 30sec to shoot after going over half way line. Hard to do at Club level as ref has enough to do. Something like it"

Equally, respondents proposed that removing the advanced mark would encourage players to shoot for goal from distance, instead of trying to find a teammate for the mark.

"Get rid of the advanced mark."

"Get rid of the mark. Teams should be using games bases approach to develop good technical kickers."

More positively, respondents also focussed on the need for changing coaching behaviours and the role that coach development might play in encouraging long-range shooting.

"County Coaching and Games Staff to communicate clearly to club coaches that scoring points from distance becomes a primary KPI of the club Go Games programme by actively rewarding this skill"

"Teaching kids from a younger age to score from longer range can only result in them bringing it into adult level football."

"Comprehensive skills programme developed for our underage players to develop this skill, incentivise risk taking at underage games"

CYNICAL FOULING

Finally, with regard to actions to limit Cynical Fouling, the expert group identified that one of the most important elements was to define cynical fouling for players, coaches, and match officials.

"Definition of what constitutes a "cynical" foul will be key but not addressing here, assuming this is sorted."

Punishment for a cynical foul should be a 20m free straight in front of the goal."

"Develop clear list of what cynical fouling is. Introduce 5-minute sin bin on first offence. This would be less severe than current black card."

"Enable referees to call cynical fouls. (Not sure how to do this exactly) Currently too many obvious cynical fouls go unpunished because they are not covered in rule"

In addition to defining the cynical foul, the expert group were in favour of adding cynical fouling to the list of fouls currently awarded a black card.

"Add to list of Black Card offences: Choke/Hold Tackle, this deliberate foul often occurs on a turnover play and often goes unpunished as one of the black card offences may not occur. It is a deliberate and systematic foul that is coached extensively as the player in possession is not brought to the ground directly thus avoiding the black card..."

"Amending the deliberately pull down an opponent rule to include broader infractions, for example to deliberately hold an opponent, who is creating or has the potential to create a scoring opportunity for their team."

"Black card for slowing the play on the counter attack"

Alongside these actions, the expert group felt that the positioning of any free awarded due to a cynical foul could be a significant deterrent.

"Cynical foul results in a free kick 50m advanced (I.E. in scoring zone). Think penalty try in rugby"

"Cynical Foul inside the 21 line – Penalty"

"Cynical foul inside 45m line is a free from 13m"

Finally, the expert group considered the creation of a cumulative foul or team foul to negate cynical fouling:

"A team foul system similar to basketball is introduced so if a team commits more than 5 fouls on one specific opposition player a free is automatically awarded on the 30m line in front of goals."

"After a certain number of fouls a team which commits a foul is penalised by having a free conceded on their 21 in front of the posts."

"If 3 cynical fouls are committed by a team in a game, the player who commits the 3rd cynical foul be sent off for the duration of the game and the opponent be awarded a penalty kick."

ROUND 2

In Round 2, the questions were informed by the actions identified in Round 1 towards promoting Kicking Skills, Long-Range Scoring, and reducing Cynical Fouling. In this round, the expert group were asked to identify strengths and challenges/unintended consequences of the proposal.

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE KICKING

Kicking Proposal 1: "We need to create space in the attacking areas to reward a kick pass and increase the likelihood of successful completion. Limit the number of players allowed in their own half. Also means that there will be players in attacking half to receive a kick pass if turned over. Less players more space."

This proposal envisaged that there would be a limit on the number of attacking players who would be permitted to retreat into their own half. Respondents felt that there was great merit to the proposal.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

It was felt that the advantages were related to the opening of space in the attacking half of the field, to ensure that attacking players were provided with the opportunity to create and exploit space in attack:

"I believe it is a really strong, game changing proposal as it would be difficult to 'pack' a defence with 12 players and the play is more naturally stretched when turn overs occur."

"Encouraging the kick pass into a less congested area of the pitch, will promote the kick pass and hopefully the space necessary to kick for a score."

"This proposal to limit the numbers of players in their own half will have the immediate positive effect of countering the current ultra defensive strategy of 15 players inside the defending 45m line when not in possession"

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

It was also noted by respondents that there would be considerable challenges in implementation, largely related to the ability of match officials to adequately judge the number of players in the relevant half of the field:

"Challenges: Regulating, managing and enforcement by officials in a very dynamic game Unintended Consequences: 1. Disruption of fluency of game due to infringements of the rule. 2. What happens as a man is chasing a ball carrier back into his own half. We don't want a scenario where he just stops. Does a man on the far side leave his own half? How would that be managed, timed etc? 3. It could potentially end up encouraging carrying of the ball forward and not kicking."

"Impossible to referee at local GAA level when only 1 match official. Where would you limit the players passing? Only way it can be done is line umpires being in communication with referee."

"Very difficult for referee a fixed amount of players in a half. Half is too vague and there is no Halfway line across the full pitch. Would require a new halfway line or else use the 65 line to determine "half".

Kicking Proposal 2: "Teams must keep at least 3-4 players in the opposition half at all times. This will make players kick ball when they win back possession."

This proposal was more specific than Proposal 1 in that it identified a specific number of players who would be mandated to remain in the attacking half of

the field.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

The identified strengths for this proposal were similar to those for Proposal 1 and related to the creation and exploitation of space by attacking players.

"It would cut out the blanket defence & allow more space in general which would result in more scores & a more open game."

"Could potentially create more space and gives an attacking presence even when without the ball"

"I feel this will have a positive influence on the game forcing teams to keep players up the field, thus tracked by the opposition defenders, which will create more space for players to be creative i.e. players will take on a long kick pass"

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

The challenges/unintended consequences were again related to enforcement and the ability of match officials to adjudicate whether there were 3 – 4 players in the attacking space.

"Again rules & regulations to ID the 4 defenders + 4 forwards from each team who are not allowed outside their zone. What is the sanction for breach of rule, how can managers be facilitated to swap some of these players with others. Will the workload of the other 7 players be increased too much because of this or will it encourage those 7 players to kick the ball more & have the 4 v 4 match ups in the attacking zone?"

"Difficult to officiate with number of players in each zone. Difficult for players playing and working hard tackling and chasing players to stop and remain in a certain zone."

"Will be challenging for a referee to police especially at club level with no other neutral officials at the game. At least make it the opposition 65 (which is usually marked) so that the referee has a better chance of policing it."

Kicking Proposal 3: "Once a team passes inside opposition 65m line, they can't go back outside it. At the moment it pays to keep onto possession and not take risks with it."

This proposal introduced the concept of maintaining attacking play by prohibiting the attacking team from playing the ball back over the attacking 65m line, once that line had been crossed.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Some of the strengths identified by the expert group included that it would encourage attacking play, while also allowing the defensive team to push up, challenge, and turn over possession.

"This would encourage the defending team to press more, leading to more challenges for possession, and more turnovers. Relatively easy to monitor and implement. Maintains the integrity of the game."

"Again, like basketball it encourages the forward play - but basketball has this rule with a shot clock."

"It would allow teams to press the ball and increase the chance of a turnover. -This would be an improvement on players currently going back and, in many cases, using the keeper and the full pitch."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Alternatively, challenges or unintended consequences were related to the potential to encourage further handpassing, maintenance of possession, or attacking teams refusing to cross the 65m line, leading to further horizontal play prior to crossing the 65m line.

"This will encourage more handpassing to ensure keeping possession."

"Team in possession would be more likely to use hand pass to maintain possession. Can't see how it would add to kicking."

"This may lead to teams just holding the ball inside their own half of the pitch and deliberately not entering the 65m line, especially to wind down the clock i.e. lead to more 'keep ball'. Teams might be more reluctant to kick the ball to this area of the pitch. May lead to teams not pressing as high up the pitch. Any proposal that involves an 'Exclusion' zone, i.e. the 65m line, will lead to greater difficulty in refereeing and greater protests from players etc"

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE LONG-RANGE SCORING

Long-Range Scoring Proposal 1: "Award 2 points for kick from hand from play from a new exclusion zone. The current exclusion extended to 40 metres. The 40 m zone would be an arc of 40m extending from centre of the goal line. In order to make it simpler for referees (especially if the referee is some distance away from the kicker) to adjudicate if shot is outside the zone a second arc at 41 metres is drawn. The player has to have his/her standing foot on or outside the 41m arc."

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Identified strengths of this proposal are related to the need to reward long-range shooting, which would encourage the defending team to defend from further out the field, thereby creating space 'inside' into which the ball might be played. There would be further outcomes related to skill improvements and the need to focus on skill development within training.

"A reward for shooting & scoring from distance."

"More shooting, less packed defence. Teams would have to push out."

"Will increase kicking. Will improve shooting abilities. Will enhance the game for spectators."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Alternatively, challenges or unintended consequences were related to the ability of match officials to judge whether the shot had been taken outside of the proposed arc and the need for additional markings on the playing pitch.

"I think the desire is to speed up the game and get players moving forward at pace. There is a danger here that we would be encouraging teams to go backwards to get into the long range scoring zone."

"Pitches that are badly marked or not marked. There have been many incidents of high profile (usually club) championship matches where a mark has or hasn't been awarded incorrectly because the referee couldn't see where the line was. Personally I wouldn't have a second arc, if the standing foot is outside the arc or on the line, it's a two point score, second arc adds needless complication. One arc, more advantage to the attacking team."

"Extra lines on the pitch. Hard for referee to police. Do we need the 45m line any more then or could it be removed and all 45s taken on that arced line?"

Long Range Scoring Proposal 2: "Introduction of a 2 point line (an arc 40m from the goal) would incentivise long range shooting. Any point scored from outside the line awarded two points. Would probably have to be accompanied by a move to 4 points for a goal to avoid unintended consequence of reducing goal attempts. It would not add an undue additional burden on referees and should be possible to implement universally (across all levels)."

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Proposal 2 is similar to Proposal 1 in this section, however, it extends the proposal by not alone increasing the points awarded for a kicked score from outside 40m, but it also proposes to increase the worth of a goal to 4 points.

The expert group identified similar strengths to those of Proposal 1, including the encouragement of long range kicking, enhanced skill development, and the rewarding of attacking play (either through addition points, or the higher rated goals).

*"Encourage shooting from distance * 4 point for goal may encourage teams to go for goal more often."*

"Very good proposal. Keeps the ambition to go for goals high on agenda and promotes long kicking and allows teams chance to reduce score differences."

"This proposal tips the balance in favour of attack-minded teams as it rewards positive intent to score long range points and create goal chances."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Consequences identified included the potential to encourage cynical play or further massed defences due to the increased worth of a goal:

"Would cynical fouling increase to prevent goals at all costs?"

"How will score umpires adjudicate from distance to award 1/2 point score Differing flags required? Challenging for referee."

"Teams decide that 4 points for a goal just can't happen and fill the defence to block the area. Would a 'bonus' points system in League tables reward attacking play more? A bonus point for 3 or more

goals? A bonus point for 20 or more points in total? It rewards both teams as opposed to punishing one."

Long Range Scoring Proposal 3: "Teams must keep at least 3-4 players in the opposition half at all times to declutter the defence."

This proposal was similar to that for Kicking above, however, the expert group were asked to consider the proposal from the perspective of encouraging Long-Range Scoring.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Strengths were similar to those above for Kicking, in that the expert group felt that the proposal would create space in the attacking area for each team, encouraging attacking play and reducing overly defensive structures. However, the challenges and unintended consequences were also similar, related to the ability of match officials to accurately judge the number of players in each space.

"Increase in space for shooting - some more prolific attackers/forwards in danger areas."

"Less players will create more space and allows some more freedom for attackers and gives the options for long range scores."

"Would prevent too many players in the defensive zone & create space, as well as enhance the opportunity to kick the ball out of defence when setting up attacks."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

"Will be challenging for a referee to police especially at club level with no other neutral officials at the game. At least make it the opposition 65 (which is usually marked) so that the referee has a better chance of policing it."

"Again, also very hard to police. What happens when a player is black/red-carded - the team could be 'punished twice' if they have already been ordered off / sin-binned from that area."

"Improve ball winners to win long ball from kicks. Remember in a pass there is kicker and receiver Coaches will have to coach off the ball for forwards to make runs, so it is easier for them to receive the ball and coach defenders to contest for the ball making the game a better spectacle with one v one contests."

As well as the promotion of what were felt to be positive elements of the game, the public survey also identified that Cynical Fouling was the most prominent negative issue in the game.

ACTIVITIES TO LIMIT CYNICAL FOULING

Cynical Fouling Proposal 1: "Move the ball forward 50m for cynical fouls that currently merit a black card. This would punish the player who fouls because it would increase the opposition's chance of scoring."

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

There was general agreement on the need to reduce cynical play, with the expert group identifying that it would punish the cynical foul and encourage better tackling.

"Will properly punish a cynical foul Will encourage better tackling especially late in games."

"Actions should have consequences. Absolutely any foul deemed to be cynical (keep it open to interpretation) then gives free advantageous. Not sure you need 50m advance though (can't measure 50m), a simple free on the 20m line would suffice!"

"Excellent. A real penalty."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Challenges were related to the need to adequately define the cynical foul and ensuring that match officials would be able to differentiate between 'borderline' fouls and the ability of officials to judge the 50m distance. Equally, it was noted that the 50m penalty might be a deterrent to the attacking team, depending on where the foul was committed.

"Challenge for referee on border decisions is it a cynical foul or not!"

"I think the distance of 50m is too far, it's a lot of ground for the ref to cover etc, I think the distance should be 30m."

"Team is 2 down, late in game, 60 yards out, trying to create a goal. Cynical foul. Can't kick quick free. Free brought forward 50m to say 14m line, chances of getting goal is very limited as opposition will fill goals."

Cynical Fouling Proposal 2: "Infringements covered by black card should be extended to include cynical fouling irrespective of whether a player is dragged to the ground. Blatant pulling back or blocking of a player who has got a run on his man should be a black card offence."

This proposal seeks to extend the Black Card infringements to include cynical fouling.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

The expert group were mixed on this proposal, as several respondents indicated that it would increase the challenge on match officials and that there would need to be clear definitions of the various fouls for which the penalty is a Black Card. Strengths include the increased sanction for cynical play, which was praised.

"Agree - again it simplifies things. Cynical play is a blatant foul to your teams advantage where there was no realistic legal challenge on a ball."

"Too many cynical fouls are not covered in rule, teams have learned how to tackle per the rule. They tackle cynically in ways that aren't covered in rule. The word Cynically should be included as a rule rather than just a Category."

"This is good. Stop teams making those "great free to give away" tackles."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

"Refs will have to be very clear about what exactly the cynical foul was"

"This will be very hard to police for referees as there

are so many harmless coming together which can look like blocking or pulling. Adding to the referee's workload."

"It adds to more interpretations for a referee to deal with. The proposal should simplify definition, not add more conditions"

Cynical Fouling Proposal 3: "Introduce a team persistent fouling black card. After a specific number of cynical fouls by a team, the referee could issue a team warning, next cynical foul is a black card for that player, irrespective of if it is that players first infringement. Currently, teams are coached to cycle their cynical fouls between players. Theoretically the team would have 15 yellow cards before being properly punished. This would increase discipline and enable early kick passes etc."

Some innovative proposals were put forward during Round 1, including the consideration of team fouls or persistent fouls.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Identified strengths of this proposal include the potential to reduce team fouling, or the spreading out of fouls to ensure that any individual player does not receive a caution.

"Potential to reduce co-ordinated fouling by a team, spreading out the fouls among a number of players."

"Will encourage more discipline in tackle. Will punish teams who choose to close a game out with cynical fouling. Combined with some of other suggestions above it could work really well."

"Collective punishment to counteract a collectively cynical strategy."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Challenges again were related to the definition of cynical, the additional imposition on the match officials, and the need for additional instruction for officials and coaches/players.

"Very clear communication required by referee indicating the relevant number as cynical fouls accumulate. After the first black card for same, would the count reset to 0 or keep accumulating?"

"Very clear instruction from the referee to the team/ management will be needed. Possibly even another colour card introduced so teams are aware they are sailing close to the wind. Again, more hassle on referees."

"Why give a team a break on any amount of cynical fouls?? As outlined above in cynical fouling proposal no 2, any foul a referee determines to be cynical should be a black card and 10mins in the sin bin. Players and coaches will quickly learn to adjust."

ROUND 3

Round 3 of the Delphi study involved circulating proposals received from consultations with County and Provincial units as well as from other correspondences received. A total of 5 proposals were put to the expert group.

LIMITATIONS ON GOALKEEPER 1

Proposal 1: Feedback has proposed placing a restriction on the involvement of the Goalkeeper in general play to within the defending 45m line. This would mean that Goalkeepers could take part in general play up to their own 45m line only.

This proposal (and Proposal 2) indicated a need to place a restriction on the ability of the Goalkeeper from joining the attacking play, with a restriction in place at the 45m line (Proposal 1) or the 65m line (Proposal 2).

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

The identified strengths reflect the creation of additional space for outfield players and the reduction of slow play.

"Strong proposal but would like it restricted to 13-metre line."

"Leaves more space for designated outfield players to show skills. Distinctive goalkeeper jersey makes rule easier to apply than alternative suggestions."

"Reduces slow tedious build up play which is not attractive to the spectator. Reduces risk of keeper being caught outfield when opposition turn over the ball"

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

However, there was a viewpoint expressed that these proposals would place a restriction on one player only, thereby changing the format of the game whereby players were free to engage on any part of the pitch. Equally, it was noted that the expert group felt that some current Goalkeepers add considerably to the spectacle of the game, through long range kicking/scoring attempts and the excitement generated amongst the crowd when the Goalkeeper is challenged or turns the ball over.

"Some keepers have kicked fantastic long-range scores, also there is excitement in keeper getting caught out of his goal and opposition scoring goals."

"Limited impact on supporting the forwards, especially in the dying minutes of a game the losing team cannot send all their players up the field to draw the game."

"Currently, the goalkeeper pushing further up the pitch has allowed teams to make better inroads in attack by creating overloads. It is also high risk from the attacking team and has added excitement to the current game. If part of the intention is to add excitement, then we may in fact be removing a part of our game that currently creates this."

LIMITATIONS ON GOALKEEPER 2

Proposal 2: Feedback has proposed placing a restriction on the involvement of the Goalkeeper in general play to within the defending 65m line. This would mean that Goalkeepers could take part in general play up to their own 65m line only.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

This proposal was a replica of Proposal 1, bar the limitation on Goalkeeper movements would come into effect from the 65m line rather than the 45m

line. This was considered an improvement, as it allowed considerable freedom for Goalkeepers and attacking teams, while still reducing the slower play.

"Reduces slow tedious build up play which is not attractive to the spectator. Reduces risk of keeper being caught outfield when opposition turn over the ball."

"This still allows the keeper to travel well up the field and contribute to setting up attacks."

"Would allow teams to create an overload expose teams who sit too deep in a low block."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Similar challenges were identified to those for Proposal 1:

"It would mean the team in possession would find getting overloads more difficult once over their 65, making short passes a more difficult option. May encourage teams to look for longer passes up into the attacking area as options are now more limited just over the 65."

"This proposal removes the act of free movement for any player around the pitch."

"Goalkeepers can enhance our game they have the same values as other 14 players so shouldn't have restrictions, stop them receiving multiple back passes."

RESTRICTION TO ADVANCED MARK

Proposal 3: The Advanced Mark would only apply to clean catches made inside the 20m line from kicks originating outside the 45m line. The catching player would have the option to call for a mark, or play on. Where the player chooses to play on, if no advantage accrues the referee shall bring the play back to the site of the mark.

This proposal changes the application of the Advanced Mark rule, whereby a Mark would be awarded for clean catches made inside the 20m line only and for passes that originate from beyond the 45m line.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Identified strengths of this proposal include the encouragement of longer kicking and more direct attacking play, as well as the potential for additional high fielding.

"Would encourage longer range kicking to enable the mark. Would also mean higher fielding as ball will generally need to be in air longer."

"Encourage a lot more direct ball, you can go for goals knowing that you have a free shot for a point anyway."

"Will lead to more kicking and high fielding in games."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Alternatively, challenges and unintended consequences identified relate to ability of the

attacking player to play on while still having the fall-back option of the Mark. It was felt that this places the advantage firmly in favour of the attacking players. Issues related to the time allowed for the play to unwind were highlighted.

"Gives the forwards too much of an advantage. Encourage an even more defensive game as teams seek to prevent this."

"The line 'Where the player chooses to play on, if no advantage accrues the referee shall bring the play back to the site of the mark' just introduces another law which is subject to the discretion of the ref and they have enough to be doing. The advantage of the forward who has marked the ball is that he has a free shot at goal. He has not been fouled. Therefore, if he decides to play on and loses the ball that should be his own hard luck."

"Duration of advantage needs to be clear from the outset. Does the player have to call the mark?"

REORGANISATION OF KICK OUT 1

Proposal 4: That all kick outs would be taken from the edge of the small rectangle in front of goal.

With a view to increasing the space available for Kickouts, Proposals 4 and 5 refer to the positioning of the ball for the kickout (Proposal 4 being from the edge of the 'small rectangle' and Proposal 5 from the 13m line).

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

With regard to Proposal 4, identified strengths include the additional space created for the Goalkeeper in kicking the ball out, while also noting that Kickouts could be taken quicker from this position.

"Makes pitch bigger for kickouts, but will depend on where defenders need to be outside. Keepers will be able to get ball on kicking tee quicker."

"It moves everyone up the field."

"Provide more space for Goalkeeper to get the kick away, Plus if the goalkeeper made a mistake he would be closer to the goals to make a recovery."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

Challenges arose from the practicalities of providing the Goalkeeper with an appropriate run up, or the ability of the proposal to be implemented at Club level. It was also felt that this proposal reduces the options for the attacking team.

"Would not have much of a run up to take the kick depending on pitches. Would this area that has some Astro turf affect the Goalkeeper kicking the ball out?"

"At club level, unless a team has a keeper with a strong or long kick out it would be very easy for the opposition team to 'box' or break the ball back towards the goal making it difficult for a team to get out of their own half of the field. Additionally, it would be very difficult for a team to break a 'full court press' especially after a scoreable free when the opposition has ample time to set up such a tactic."

"The long kickout over the press defence has become a spectacular aspect of the game in the last number of years and has become a potent attacking option. Changing the kick out location would render this very difficult."

REORGANISATION OF KICK OUT 2

Proposal 5: That all kick outs would be taken from the 13m line.

While being similar to Proposal 4, the expert group felt that by moving the Kickout to the 13m line that the benefits of opening up the pitch were not challenged to the same extent by the advantages provided to the attacking teams.

STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL:

"This would encourage the attacking team to go Full Court Press on almost all of the defending goalkeepers kickouts. Encourage the goalkeeper to get more distance into his kickouts. Discourage short kickouts as the risk may be too high."

"Again, this would encourage long kick outs and would probably be more manageable for weaker teams compared to the previous proposal."

"The goal keepers will be able to kick the ball further up the field and with another kick pass the ball could be in the full forward line in less than 30secs creating end to end play."

CHALLENGE/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PROPOSAL:

"I think this is the ideal line to kick from. No unintended consequences."

"Not as many challenges/unintended consequences as the previous proposal but for the reasons listed previously, I don't see this change in isolation improving high fielding, contests, retaining possession, etc"

"At club level, how far will the kickout go? Are we punishing teams even more after conceding a score?"

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This concluding section will present a brief summary of the findings of the Delphi study. Subsequently, some considerations on conducting a study such as this, in the context of a Football Review will be considered. Following the recognition of some of the limitations of the study, a brief section will be presented discussing the future directions to be taken.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research process engaged upon during this study was an iterative one. Initial findings from the public online survey were built upon in Round 1 of this Delphi Study, with further investigation during Round 2. Reflecting the 'live' status of this study, Round 3 involved the expert panel providing feedback on additional consultation at county and provincial levels.

The results of Round 1 provided the research team with a series of actions that could be used to promote or inhibit the presence of particular elements of Gaelic games that the public survey

identified as preferred or disliked within Gaelic football. Round 2 of this study provided further insight into the most prevalent actions, allowing the expert panel to identify strengths, challenges, and unintended consequences for each action. The authors believe that it was important that the expert panel ‘stress tests’ the proposals by reflecting on the challenges of implementation or the potential unintended consequences that might arise from their implementation. Given the panel’s expertise as coaches, coach developers, match officials, and/or administrators they were ideally placed to provide such feedback.

It is clear from the findings that the expert panel were in favour of actions that would result in competitive, free flowing, attacking Gaelic football, where the emphasis would be on the promotion and safeguarding of skill, and skilful players. It is equally clear that the presence of cynical play was considered detrimental to Gaelic football, and as outlined in the particular responses, the expert group were keen to reduce its presence in our game.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

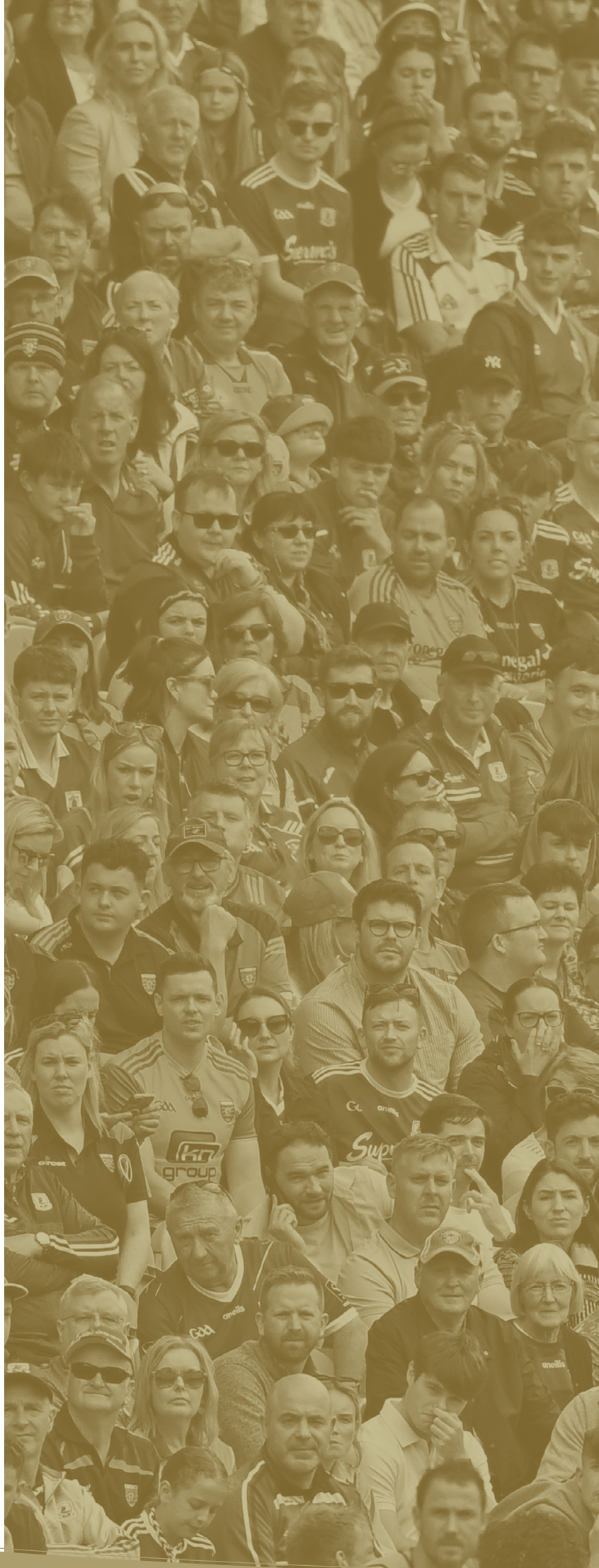
Delphi studies can—by their very nature—be complex and time consuming. The need for participants to complete multiple rounds can lead to high drop-out rates which impacts on validity of the study. Initially, more than 57% of the identified experts responded to the Round 1 survey. However, in this case the total attrition rate was just 18%. The designated experts displayed commendable resilience and commitment to the Football Review Committee process.

The expert panel was composed of a collection of Gaelic games enthusiasts with considerable experience and knowledge of the game at club, school, and inter-county level. Due to the anonymous nature of this study, it is not possible to identify whether the complete responses were submitted predominantly by a single sub-set of the expert panel, or by a broad range of respondents. However, the authors are thankful to those experts who took part.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Conducting a Delphi Study as part of the Football Review Committee work arose from the need to synthesise particular actions to promote or restrict elements of Gaelic football highlighted by the public online survey.

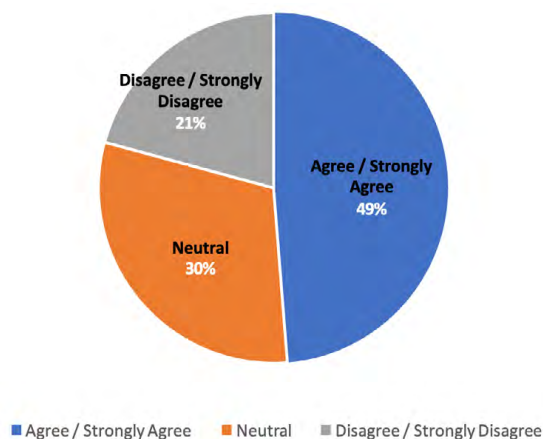
The real value of harnessing collective knowledge lies in shaping the outcomes of the Football Review Committee work. The findings of this study will be used to inform subsequent discussions by the Football Review Committee members, shaping potential recommendations, and acting as a foundation for future discussions on the evolution of Gaelic football.





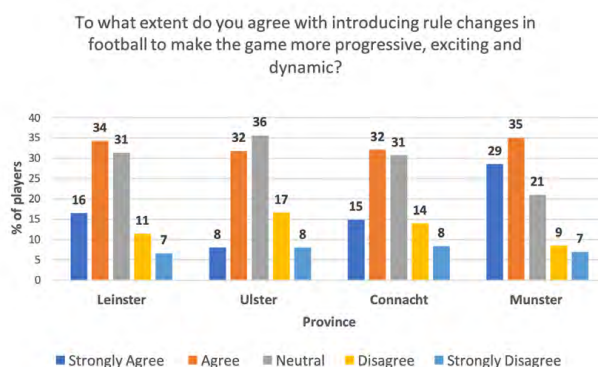


Appendix (iv) Submission by GPA



The pie chart shows responses to the question: "To what extent do you agree with introducing rule changes in football to make the game more progressive, exciting, and dynamic?" The results are as follows:

- **49%** of respondents **Agree/Strongly Agree** with the idea of introducing rule changes.
- **30%** of respondents are **Neutral** on the matter.
- **21%** of respondents **Disagree/Strongly Disagree** with the introduction of rule changes.



The chart above reveals differing levels of support across provinces for introducing rule changes to make football more progressive, exciting, and dynamic.

- **Munster** shows the strongest support, with **64%** of players either agreeing (35%) or strongly agreeing (29%) with the changes. Only **16%** disagree or strongly disagree.
- **Leinster** and **Connacht** have similar levels of agreement, with **50%** in Leinster (34% agree, 16% strongly agree) and **47%** in Connacht (32% agree, 15% strongly agree). Both provinces have a significant proportion of neutral responses (**31%** in Leinster and **32%** in Connacht), indicating a more balanced view.
- **Ulster** is particularly noteworthy, with the highest level of neutrality (**36%**) among players, indicating uncertainty or indecision about the proposed changes. However, a considerable portion of Ulster players still support the changes, with **47%** agreeing (32%) or strongly agreeing (15%). Disagreement is slightly higher in Ulster compared to other provinces, with **25%** either disagreeing (17%) or strongly disagreeing (8%).

Overall, while there is general support for the proposed rule changes across all provinces, Ulster players display a more cautious attitude, with a higher emphasis on neutrality and a slightly greater level of disagreement.

RULE SUGGESTIONS FROM PLAYERS

Here are some common ideas from the suggestions provided from the open box question in the survey to improve Gaelic football: (n=425)

1. 13-A-SIDE GAMES

A widely supported idea is to reduce the number of players on each team to 13. This would create more space on the field, potentially reducing overly defensive play and encouraging more attacking football.

2. SCORING ADJUSTMENTS

- **2-Point Line:** Many propose introducing a 2-point scoring system for long-range points from outside the 45-metre arc. This would

encourage more long-range kicking and stretch defenses.

- **Increased Goal Value:** Some suggest increasing the value of a goal to 4 points to incentivise attacking play and discourage teams from overly focusing on points.

3. PLAYER POSITION RESTRICTIONS

- **Minimum Players in Each Half:** A common theme is to require a certain number of players (usually 2 or 3) to remain in each half of the field at all times. This would prevent all players from dropping back into defense, promoting more balanced play.
- **Forwards to Stay Up field:** Similar to the previous point, ensuring that forwards remain up field could open up the game and reduce the effectiveness of blanket defenses.

4. TACTICAL ADJUSTMENTS

- **Backcourt Rule:** Once a team crosses the 65-meter line, they cannot pass the ball back



into their own half. This rule aims to prevent time-wasting and promote forward play.

- **Limiting Handpasses:** Some propose limiting the number of consecutive handpasses to encourage more kick-passing and direct play.

5. CHANGES TO THE MARK RULE

- **Abolishing or Modifying the Advanced Mark:** There is significant support for either removing the advanced mark or limiting its use to specific areas or longer kick passes to ensure it doesn't slow down the game.

6. GOALKEEPER RESTRICTIONS

- **Goalkeeper Limits:** Proposals include restricting goalkeepers from leaving their 21-metre or 45-metre lines, which would prevent them from becoming an extra outfield player and reduce ultra-defensive strategies.

7. SIN BIN/DISCIPLINE ADJUSTMENTS

- **Yellow Card Sin Bin:** Some suggest abolishing the current black card system and introducing a sin-bin system for yellow cards to ensure more consistent punishment for cynical fouls.
- **50-Metre Penalties:** Another idea is to introduce a 50-metre penalty for cynical fouls or dissent, similar to the rule in AFL, to discourage negative tactics.

8. GAME FLOW ENHANCEMENTS

- **Shot Clock or Time Limits:** Implementing a shot clock or restricting backward passes after crossing the halfway line could speed up play and reduce stalling tactics.
- **More Physicality:** Some respondents wish to see more physical play allowed, arguing that referees should penalise less for physical contests. These suggestions reflect a desire to make Gaelic football more dynamic, attacking, and spectator-friendly, while reducing the prevalence of overly defensive and time-wasting tactics.





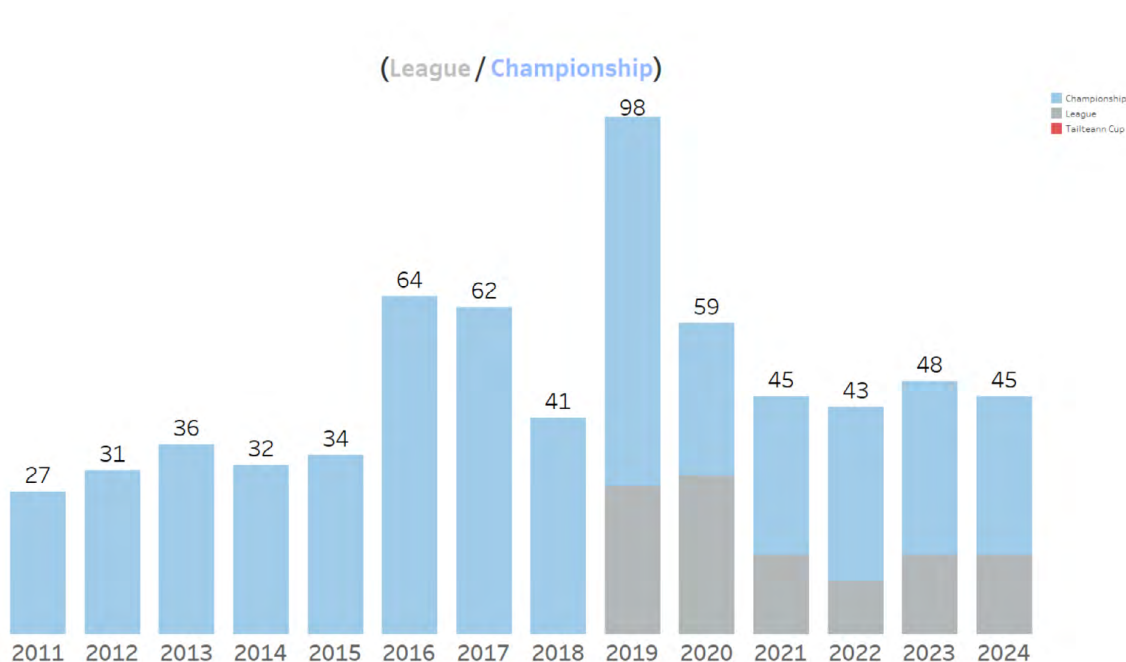
Appendix (v) Gaelic Football Game Intelligence Report: 2024

Produced for the FRC by Mr Rob Carroll

• DATA OVERVIEW

TOTAL GAMES CODED

The chart below shows the total number of games that have been analysed. In total over 600 games have been analysed; 113 League Games (2019-2024) and 522 Championship Games (2011-2024). For the purposes of year over year comparison and consistency only the Championship games have been included in the following report.



TOTAL GAMES

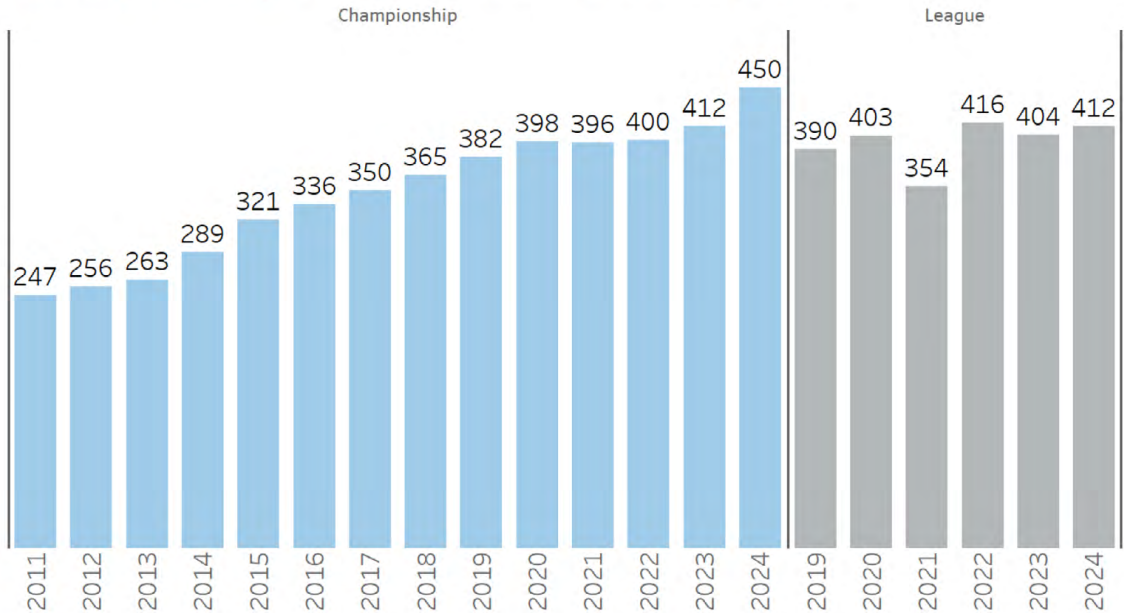
For the purposes of total scores in a season, average number of goals/points per season and winning margin all games from that season are included, regardless of them being fully coded as per above.

• PASSING

HAND-PASSING TREND

In the chart below you can see that the average number of hand passes per game has increased from 251 in 2011 to 450 in this year's Championship. While some of the increase can be explained by an increase in game time and ball in play time, that clearly that does not account for all of the increase.

Championship & League Hand Passing Trend

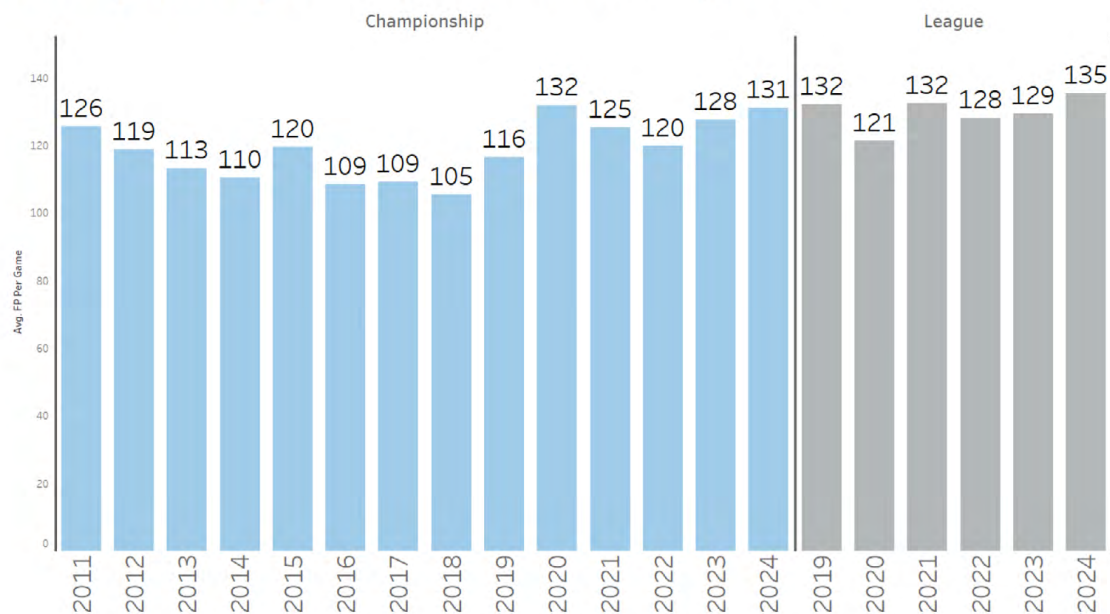


Note: Extra time is not included in the above analysis.

FOOT-PASSING TREND

The increase in hand passing does not match the increase in foot passing and despite being on the decrease from 2011 to 2018, it has started to level off at around ~130 passes per game.

Championship & League Foot Passing Trend

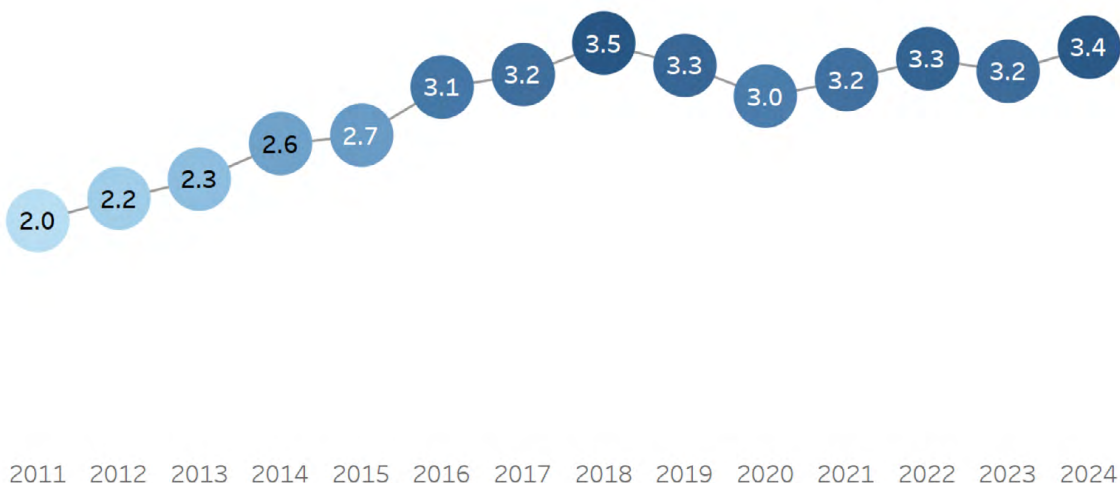


Note: Extra time is not included in the above analysis.

HAND PASS: FOOT PASS RATIO

The chart below shows the hand pass to foot pass ratio for the last 13 seasons (5 for League games). In 2011 for example for every foot pass there were 2 hand passes, in 2024 that ratio is 3.4 hand passes to every foot pass. The League games track very similarly to the Championship.

Championship | HP:FP ratio

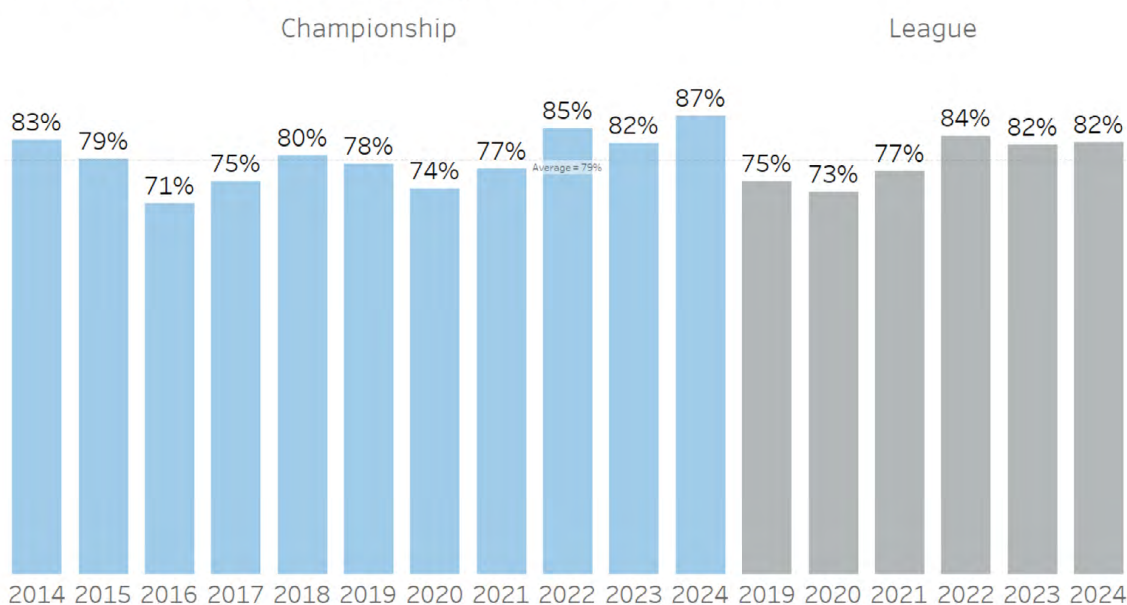


UNCONTESTED FOOT PASSES

The chart below shows the percentage of foot passes that are uncontested (i.e not kicked to contests where the defending team has a chance to turnover possession).

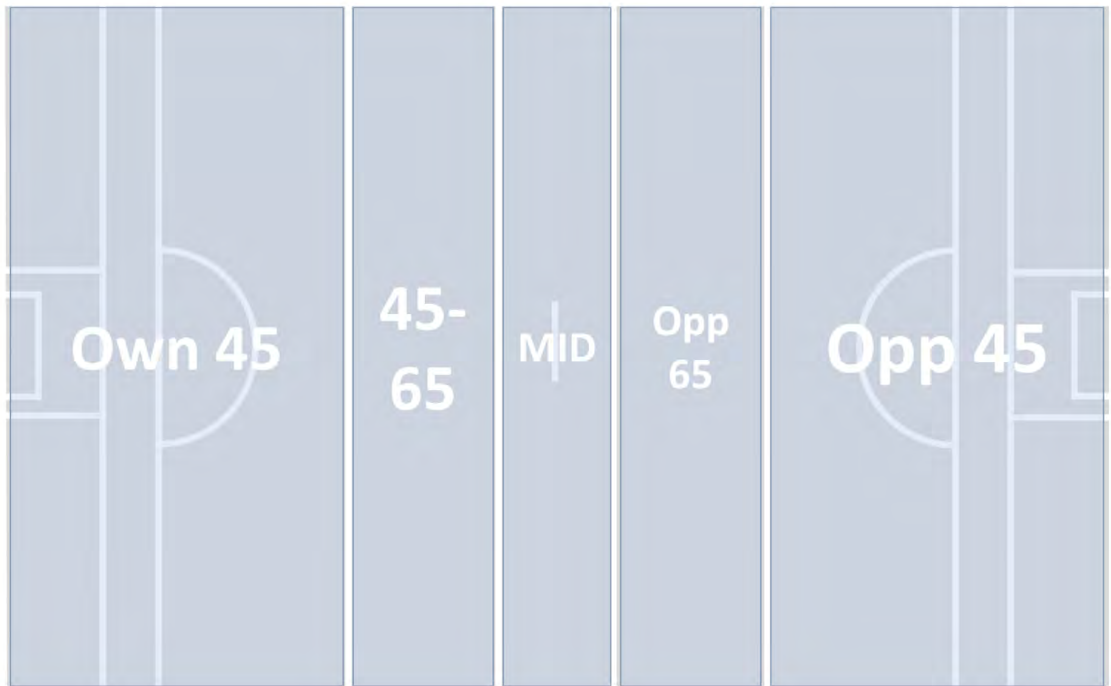
The contested/uncontested data has been coded since 2014, the average across this period is 79% uncontested kick passes. We see very similar results across League and Championship despite the smaller sample size in League games.

Championship & League | Uncontested FP



FOOTPASS LOCATIONS

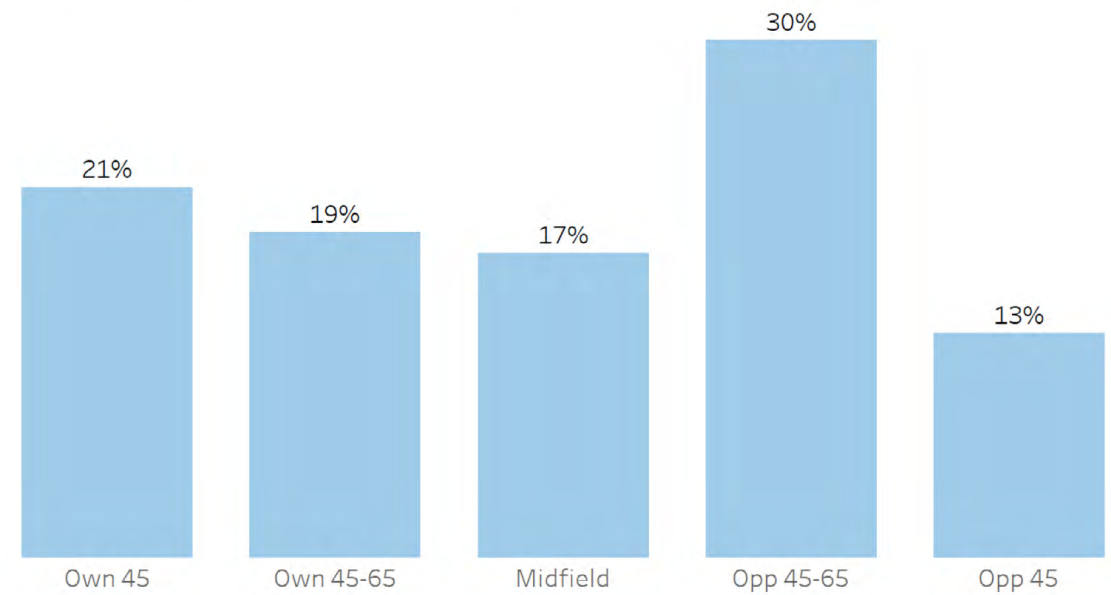
For the purposes of this analysis each foot pass is analysed with an X;Y coordinate for both the start and end of each pass. To simplify the display of this information these xy coordinates were aggregated and the pitch was broken into 5 zones as shown below.



- **Own 45:** inside the team’s own 45
- **45-65:** between their own 45 and 65m lines
- **Midfield:** covers the area between the two 65m lines
- **Opp 65:** the attacking/oppositions 65-45
- **Opp 45:** covers the area inside the oppositions 45

The chart below shows the distribution of kick passes per pitch zone. The majority, 30%, of kick passes were made between the oppositions 65 and 45 line.

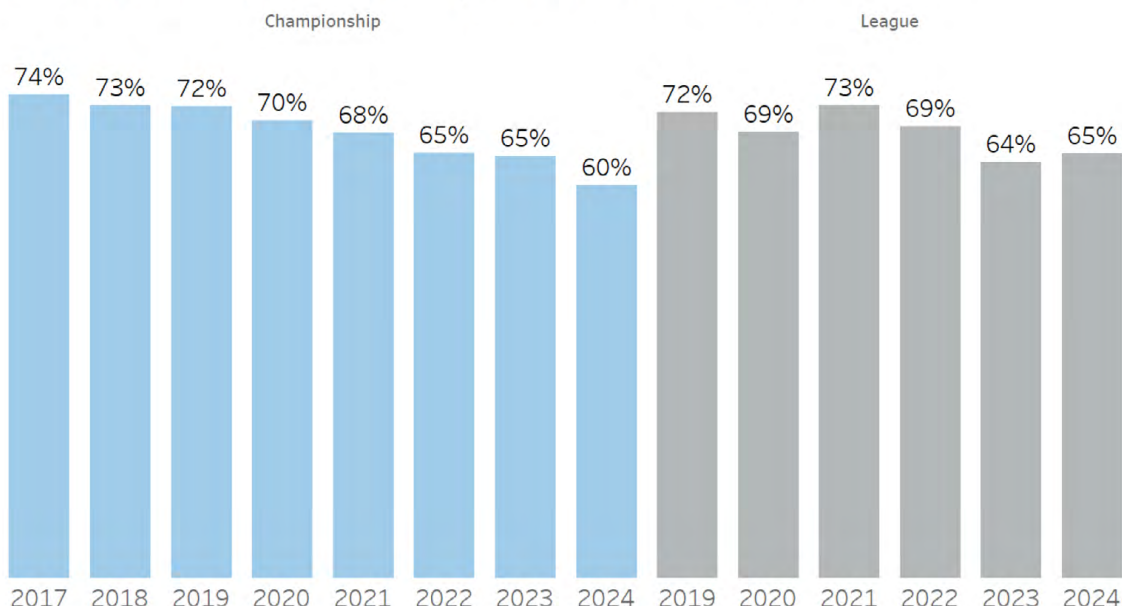
Kick Pass Location by Zone | Season 2019 - 2024



FOOTPASS FORWARD

The chart below shows the distribution of passes that traveled forward (by any distance) since 2017, when the xy coordinates were collected. We can see a downward trend across those years with the 2024 Championship having 60% of passes traveling forward.

Championship & League | % of Forward Kick Passes

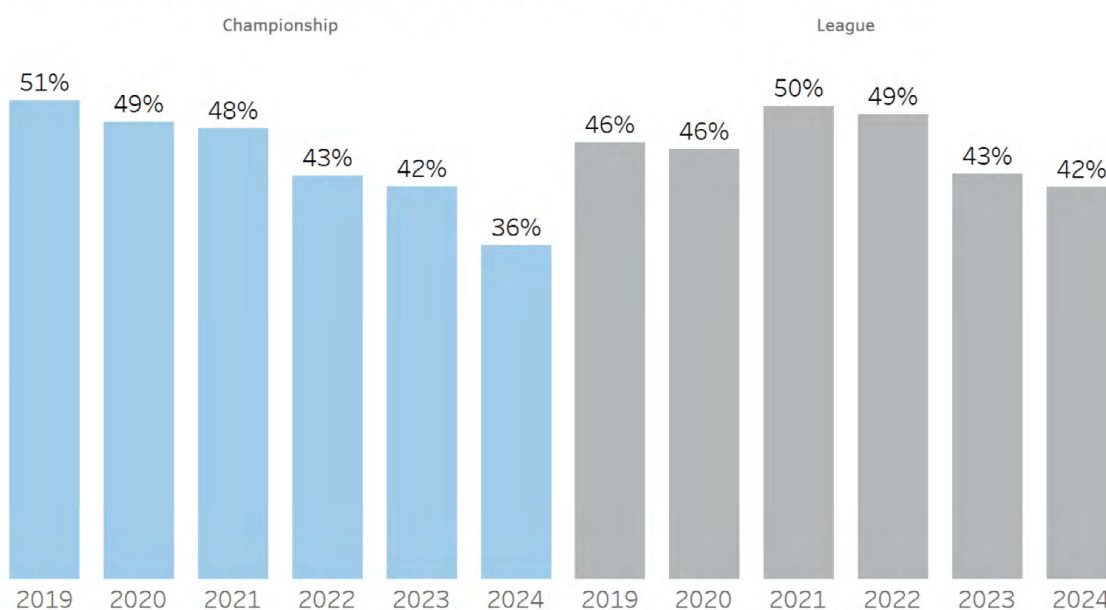


Note: Extra time is not included in the above analysis.

FOOTPASS FORWARD - 15 METRES

We can break this down further by looking at the percentage of kick passes that travel at least 15m down the pitch. This is an arbitrary number but highlights kick passes that travel a reasonable distance. In the chart below we can see in 2024 Championship for example 36% of forward kick passes met this threshold.

Championship & League | Kick Passes at least 15m

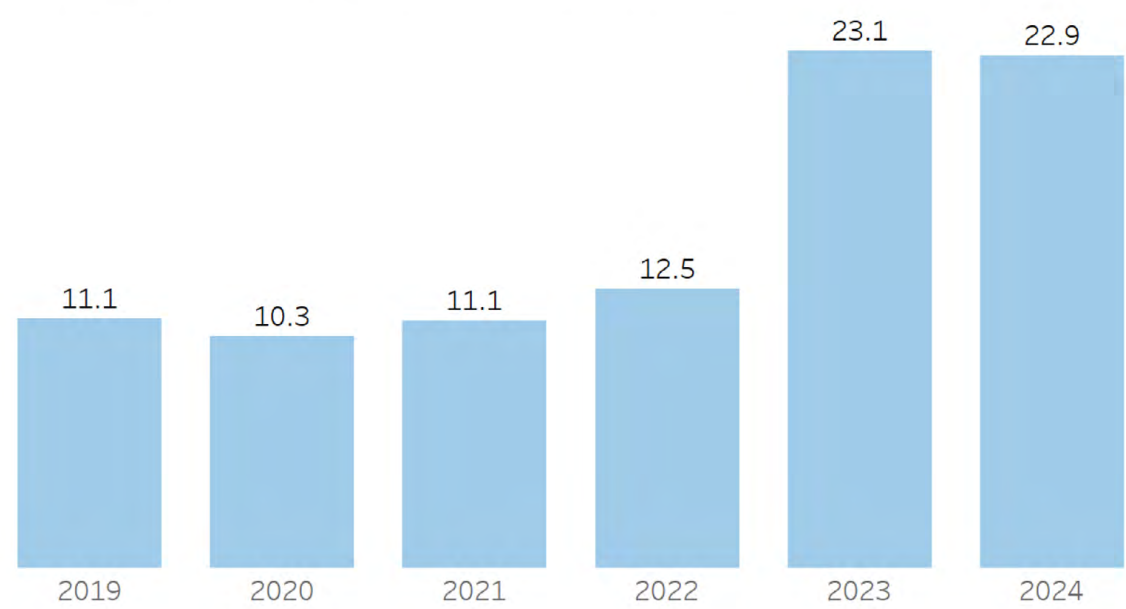


Note: Extra time is not included in the above analysis.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PASSES TO GOALKEEPER (KICK PASS AND HAND PASS)

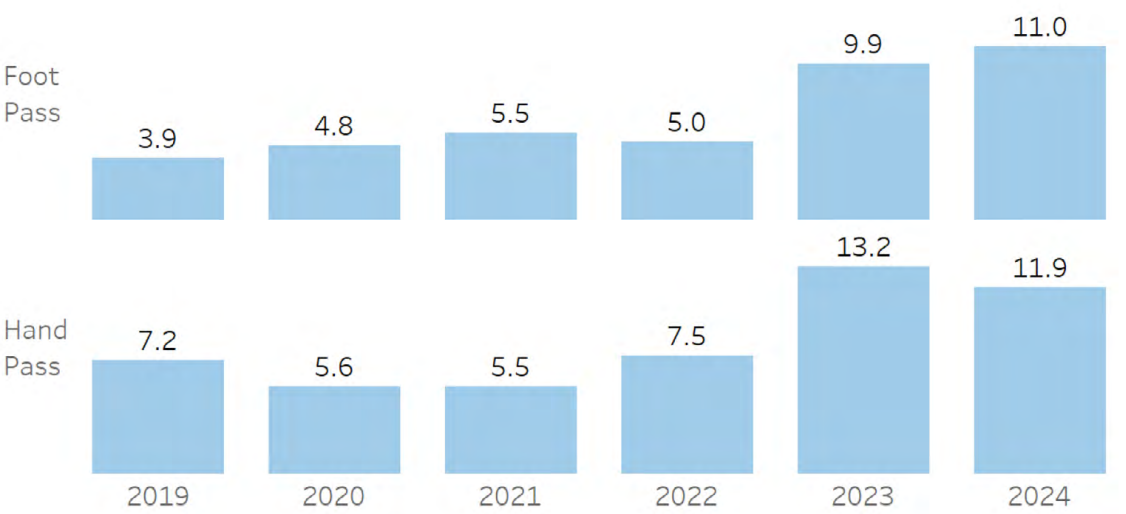
On average there were 22.9 passes to the keeper in the 2024 Championship, a considerable rise on previous years. This includes passes to goalkeepers who have moved outfield during play.

Championship | AVG Passes Back to Keeper per game



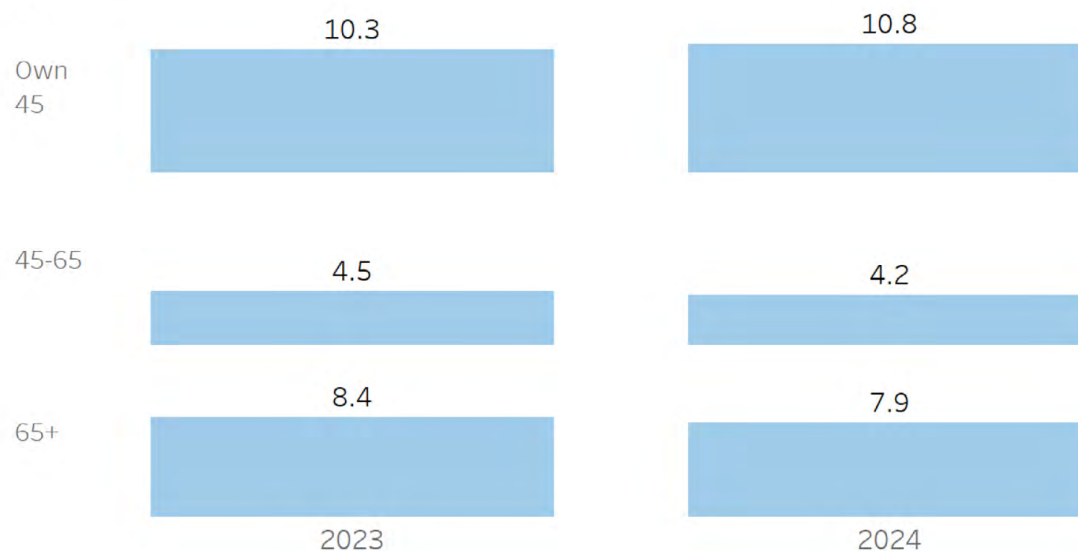
Slightly more on average are delivered with hand rather than the foot.

Championship | AVG Passes Back to Keeper Pass Type per game



We can also examine where on the pitch the passes to the GK occur. The chart below shows that the majority still occur inside the teams own 45.

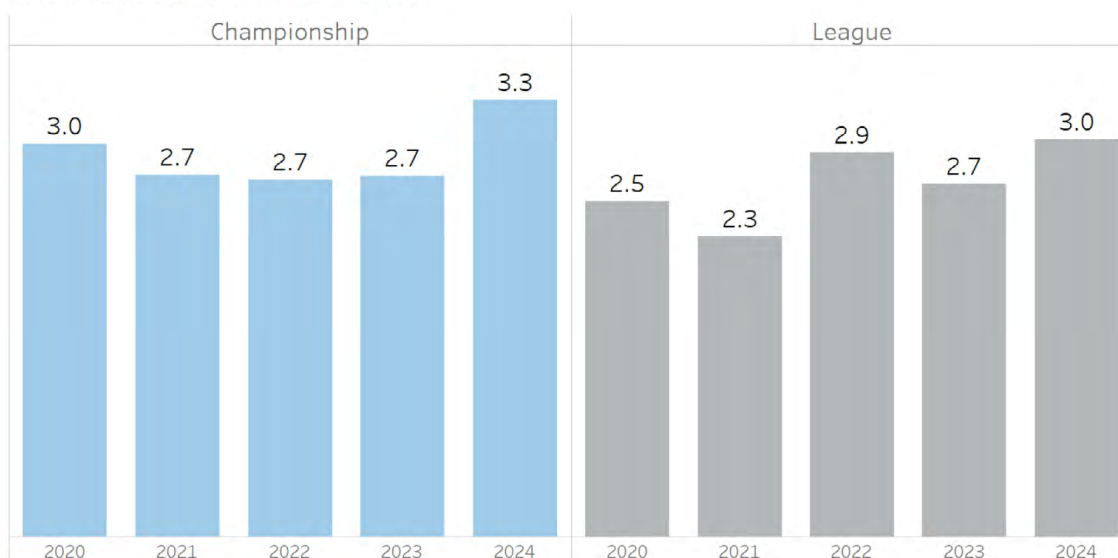
Championship | AVG Passes Back to Keeper Zone per game



NUMBER OF ATTACKING MARKS PER GAME

The chart below shows the average number of attacking marks per game across the previous 5 League and 4 Championship seasons. This is at the highest level we have seen, although only very slightly.

Advanced Marks Total

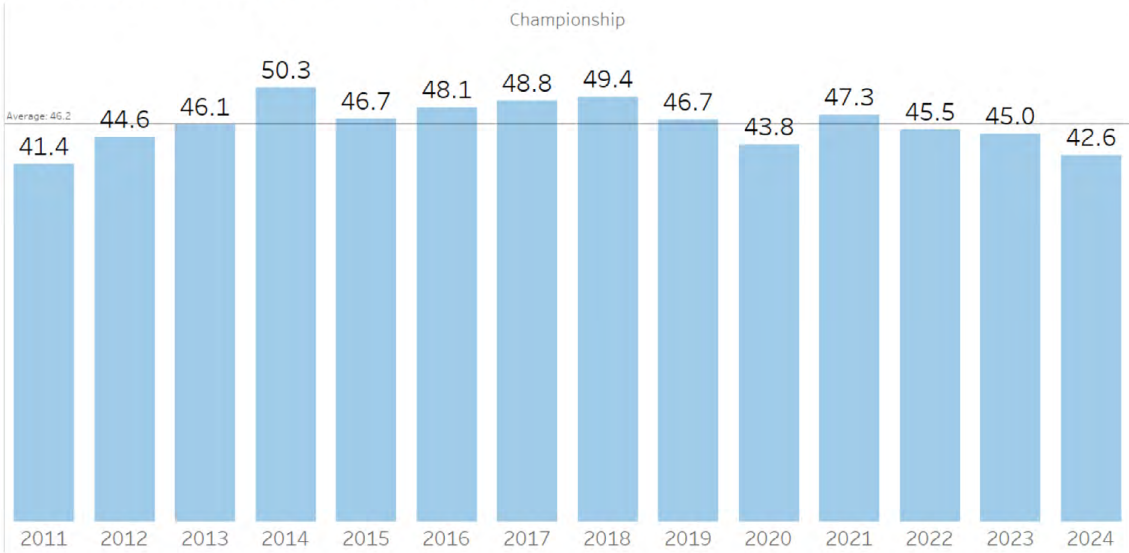


• KICKOUTS

NUMBER OF KICKOUTS/GAME

The chart below shows the average number of kickouts per game across the last 14 Championship seasons.

Championship | Total Kickouts

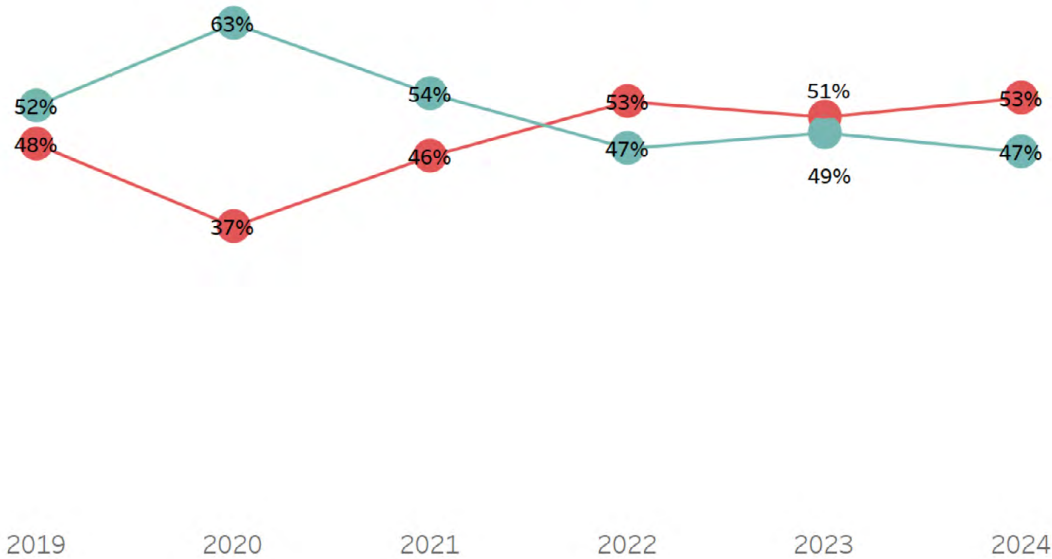


Note: Extra time is not included in the above analysis.

KICKOUTS LONG V SHORT

The chart below shows the percentage of Kickouts that are long (travel beyond the 45) or short (inside 45) .

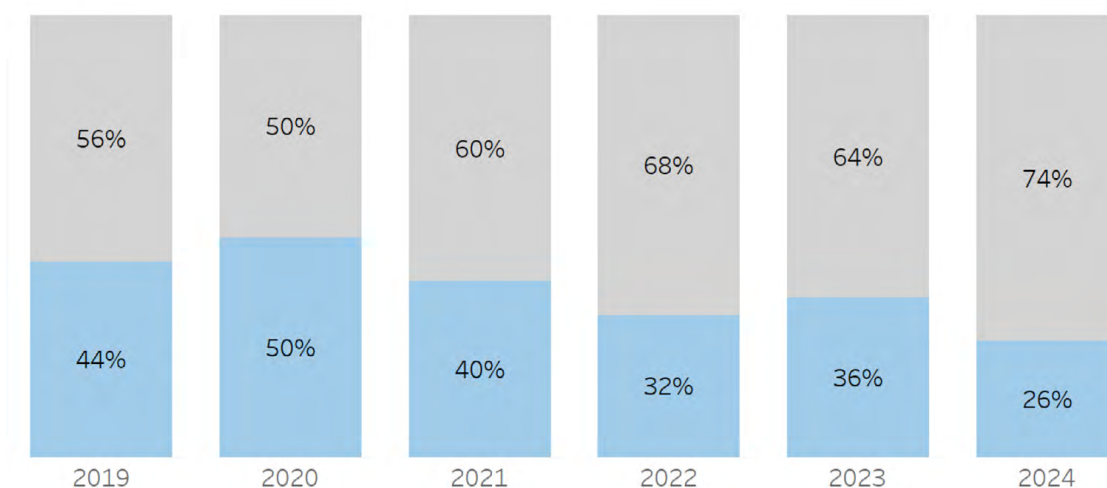
Championship | Kickout Long v Short



NUMBER OF CONTESTED KICKOUTS

All kickouts have been further classified as contested or uncontested i.e where the defending team had no reasonable chance of intercepting/catching the ball. The chart below shows the percentage of kickouts that are deemed contested (blue) across the last 6 seasons. In 2024 74% of all kickouts analysed were uncontested. This is a continuing trend towards less and less kickouts being contested.

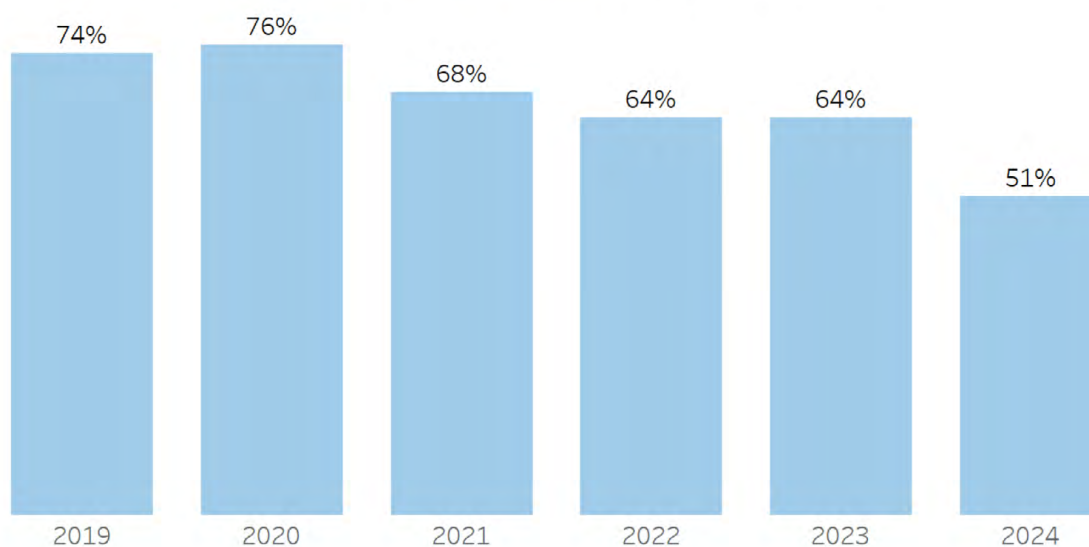
Championship | Percentage of Contested & Uncontested Kickouts



If we break kickouts into two distance buckets (i.e. long kickouts are those that travel beyond the 45) we can see that long kickouts, in previous seasons were much more likely to be contested (3 out of 4 were contested in 2019 and 2020 for example). In 2024 only 51% of Kickouts that traveled beyond the 45 were contested.

This is likely driven by 2 factors. Firstly the risk averse nature of the the defending teams to push up and contest kickouts, but also the quality of these set piece plays and teams being able to find uncontested space.

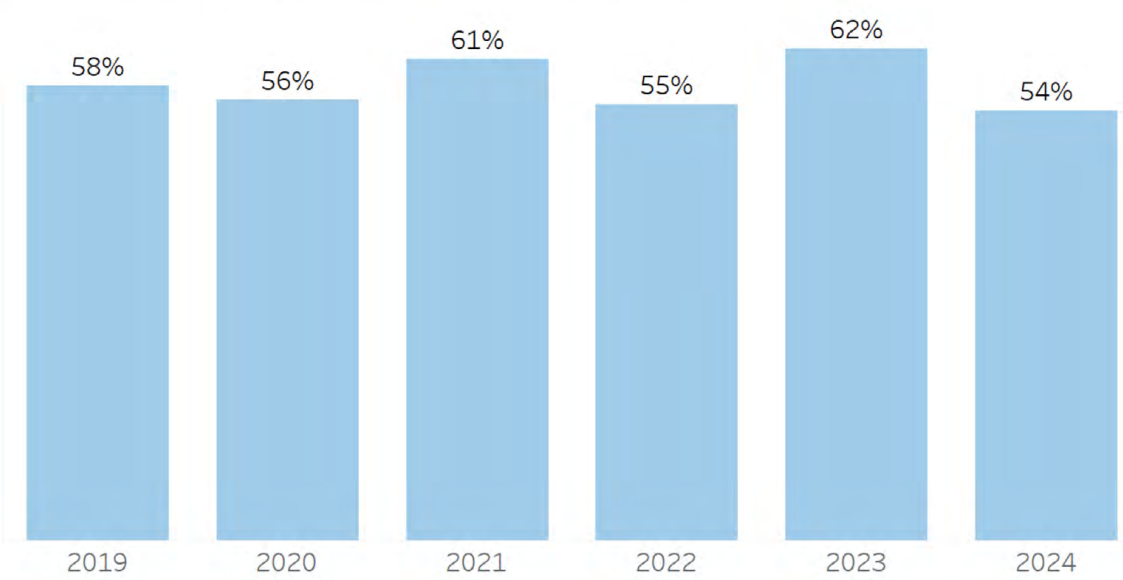
Championship | Total Contested Long Kickouts



% OF SUCCESSFUL CONTESTED KICKOUTS

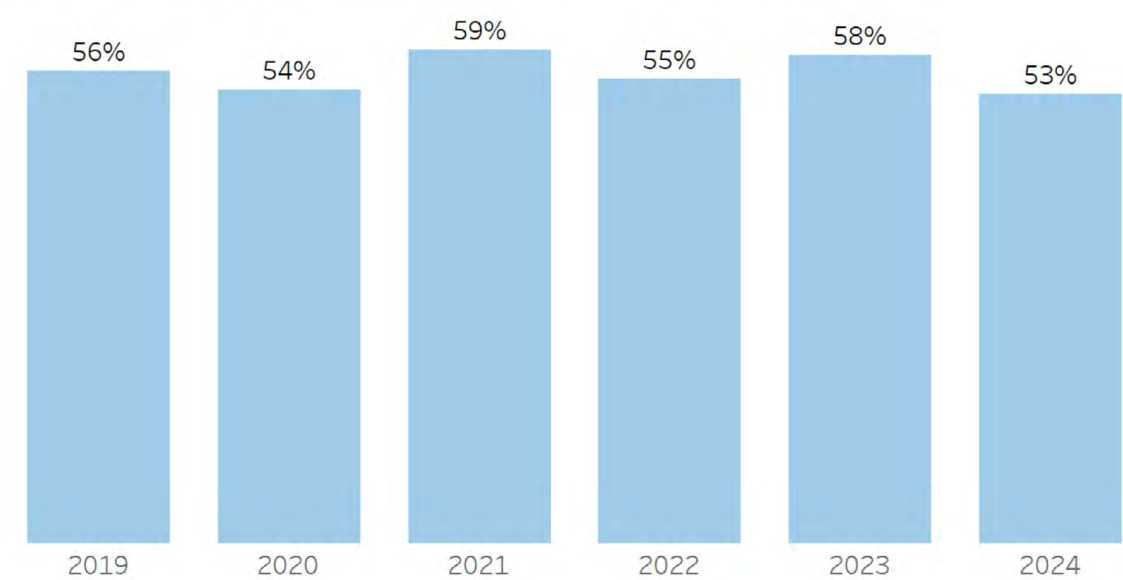
Examining only kickouts that are **contested** we can look at the % of these that are won or lost by the kicking team. The chart below shows the % of kickouts won by the kicking team where the kickout **was contested by the opposition**. Teams kicking the ball to a contested kickout generally win between 54-62% of their own kickouts.

Championship | Contested Kickout Win %



However when we examine just long kickouts we can see that the winning %, while not quite 50/50 get much closer to parity. The chart below shows the % in blue of contested kickouts that are won by the kicking team.

Championship | Long Contested Kickout Win %

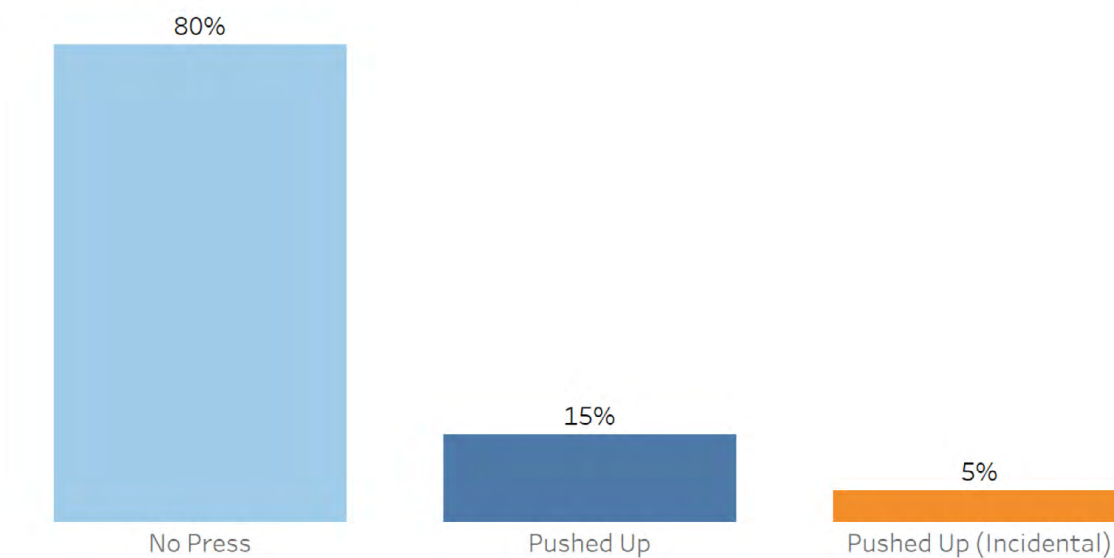


PRESSING KICKOUTS

Newly introduced for 2023 we examined if teams 'press' the opposition. We defined this as having 6 or more players inside the opponents 45 when the ball was kicked. This is not a perfect definition and there are some restrictions with regards to the TV footage available, but in the absence of spatial data of every player this was deemed the best way to code pressing on kickouts.

As well as Press, we also analysed where teams had 6 players but were clearly not making an attempt to win the ball i.e. some player jogging back towards their own goal. In the 2 seasons analysed 80% of Kickouts had no press by the opposing team.

Kickout Press | Championship | 2023 & 2024

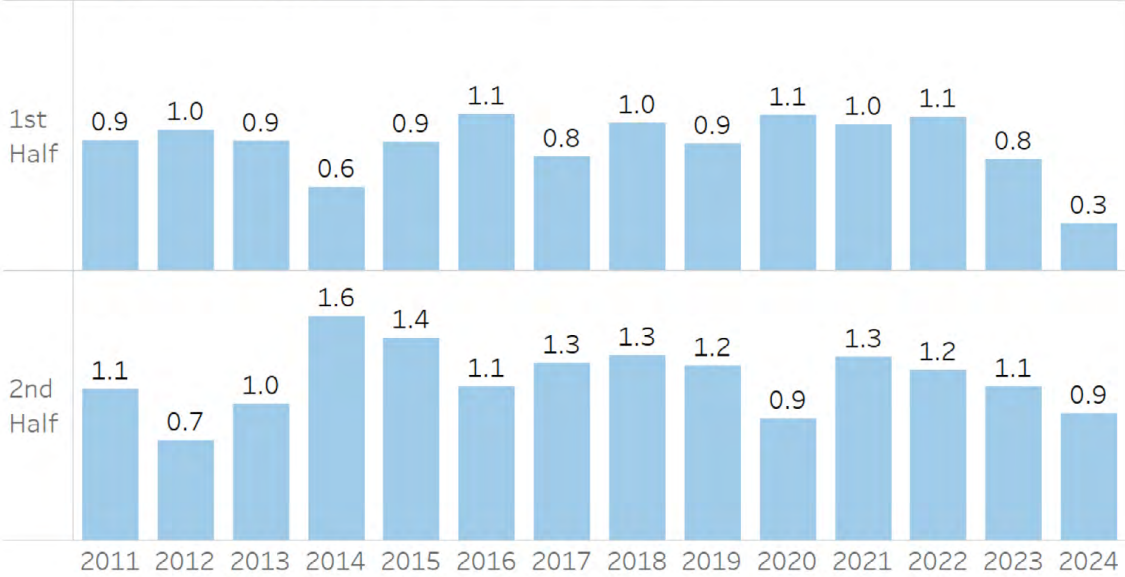


• SHOOTING

AVERAGE NO SCORES/GAME/HALF

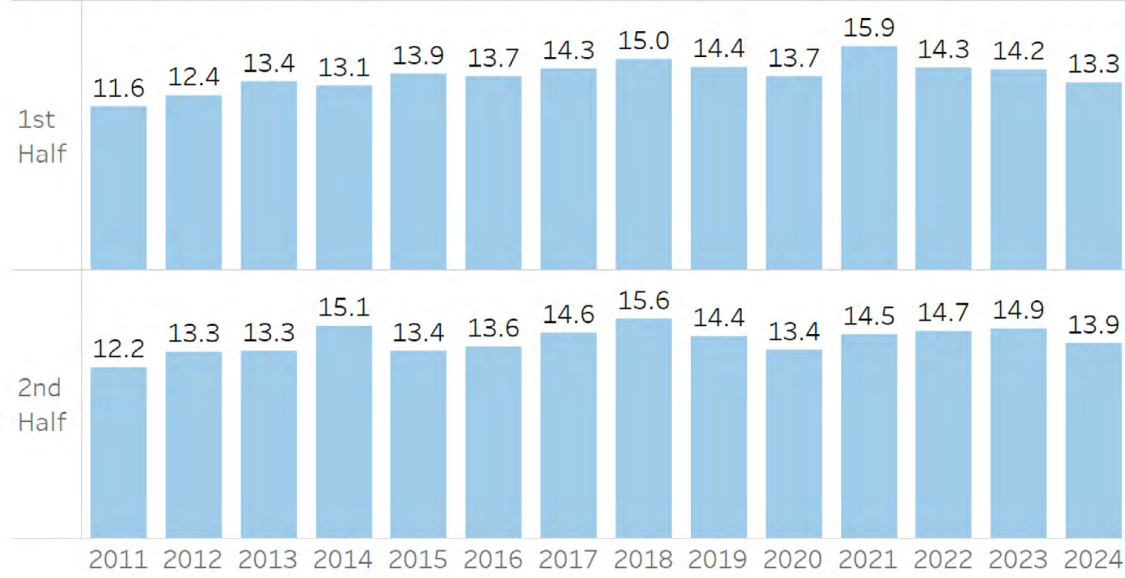
Examining which half goals are scored in shows very little difference between first half and second half. Across the 6 seasons in games analysed (not all fixtures) we can see the distribution of goals scored per half. There seems to be very little difference between both halves on average.

Championship | AVG Goal's Per Half



Similarly for points we see a slight increase, in some seasons, in the total number of points scored in the 2nd half, but it is marginal and likely just natural variance.

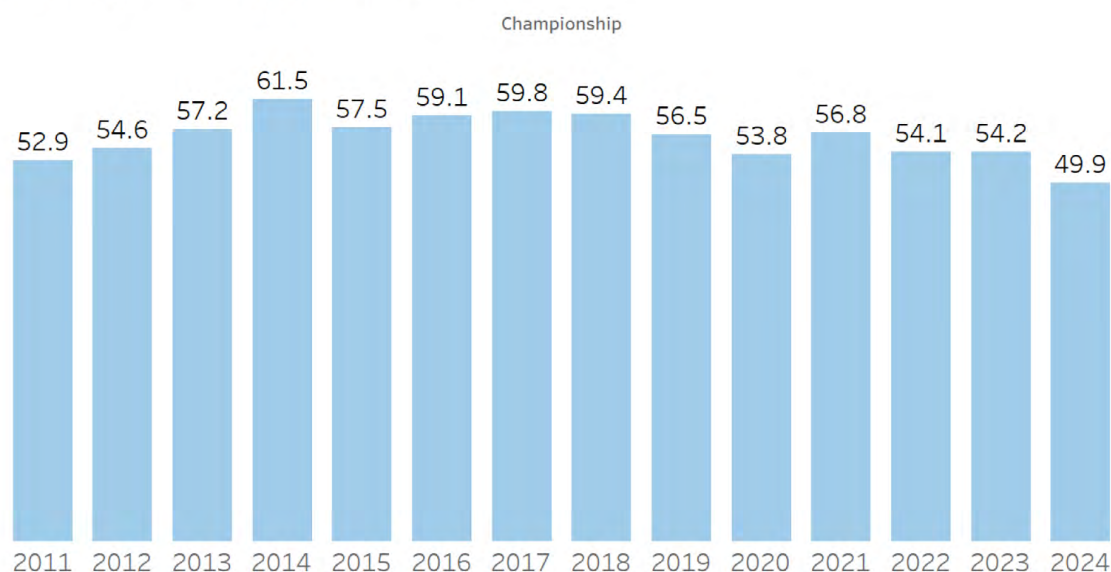
Championship | AVG Point's Per Half



ATTEMPTED SHOTS

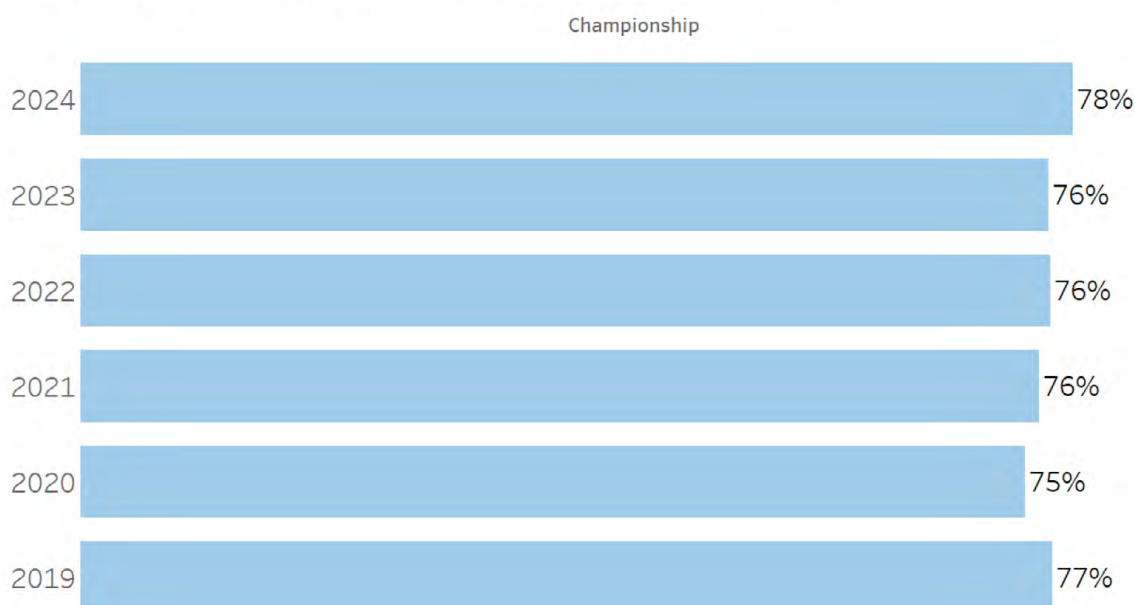
The number of attempted shots per game averaged 49.9 in the 2024 Championship season. This is the first time this has dipped below 50.

Championship | Total Shots



The table below shows the average number of shots from play across the last 6 seasons. The vast majority (~75%) of shots per game come from play.

Championship | Shot Origin Per Season

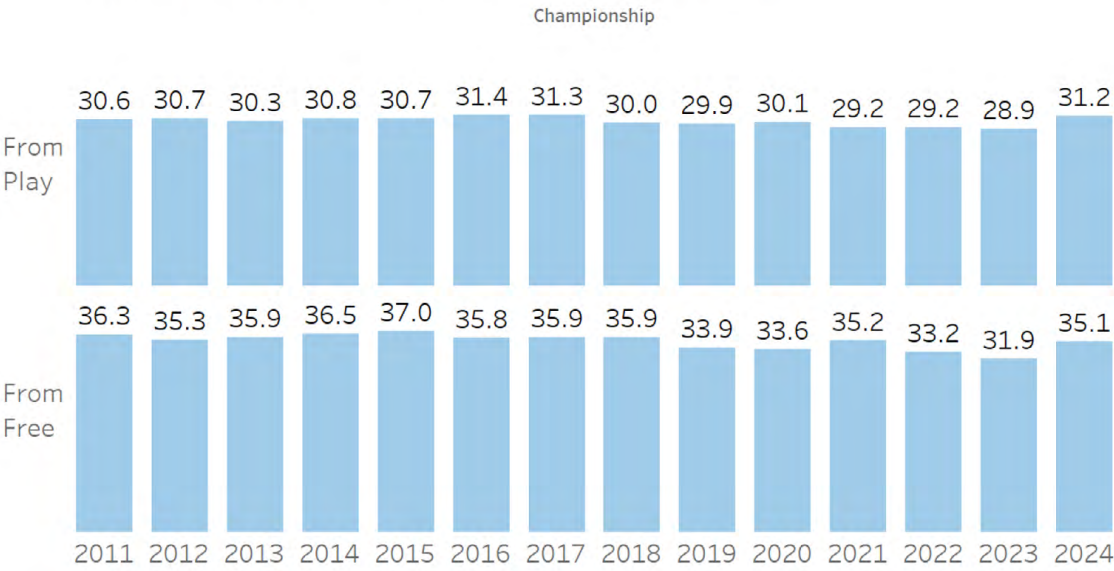


• SCORING TRENDS (ACCURACY & DISTANCE)

SHOOTING DISTANCE

For each shot the XY coordinate is recorded. The chart below shows the average distance from the centre of the goal of each shot across the previous 14 Championship seasons. There is some variance year to year in the data, but it has remained broadly consistent.

Championship | Average Distance of Shots

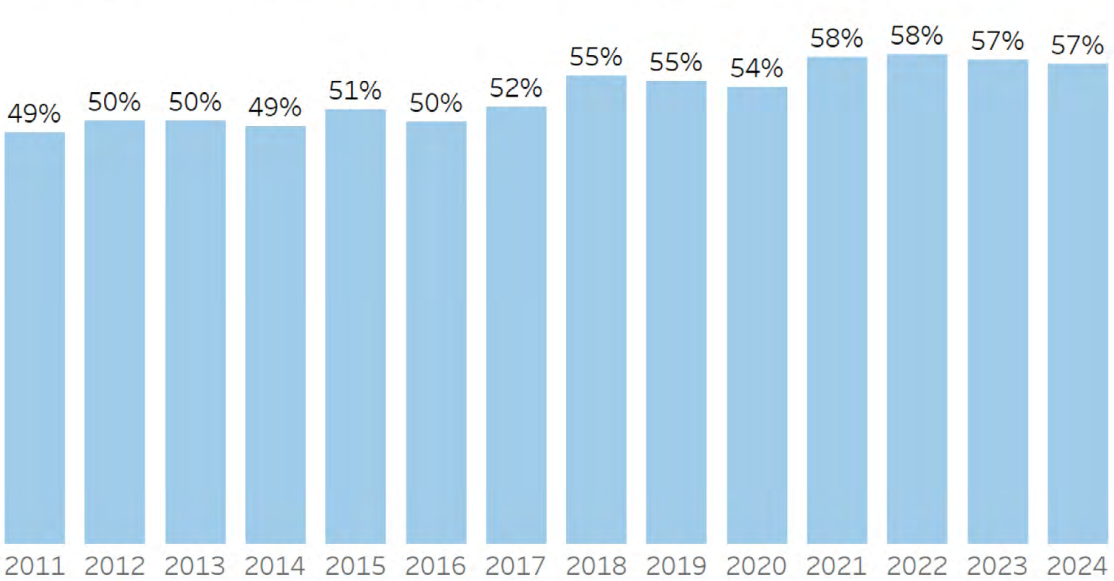


SHOOTING ACCURACY - ALL SHOTS

Shooting accuracy has been steadily rising over the last 14 seasons. There tends to be more variance and a slightly lower % in League games compared to the subsequent Championship season.

On average shots were scored (goal or point) 57% of the time in the 2024 Championship. These shots exclude penalty shootouts.

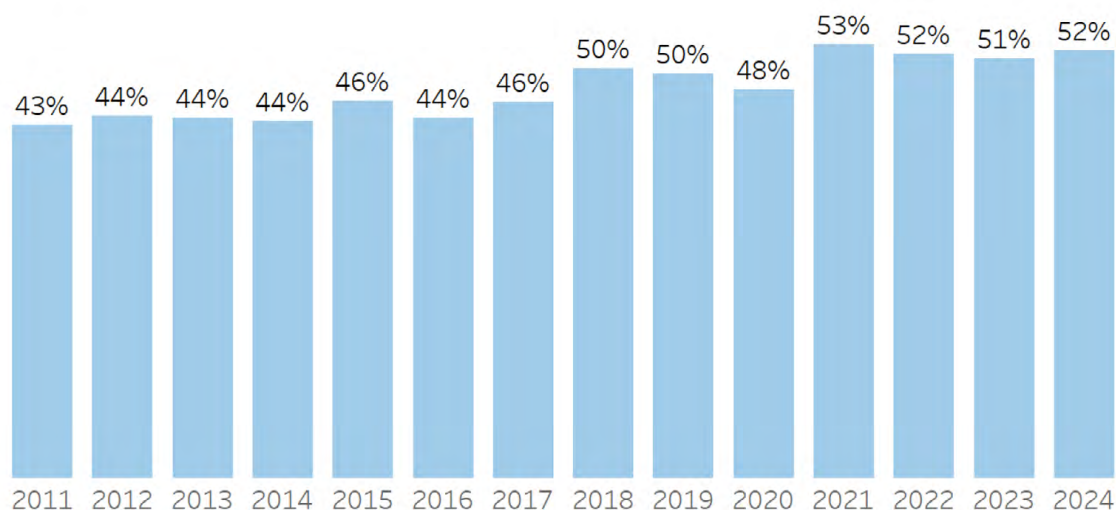
Championship | Shooting Accuracy Shot Type: All



SHOOTING ACCURACY - FROM PLAY

When we examine only shots from play, although the overall shot accuracy decreases the percentage hovers around 50% for the last 6 seasons, improving from a low of 43% in the 2011 Championship.

Championship | Shooting Accuracy Shot Type: From Play

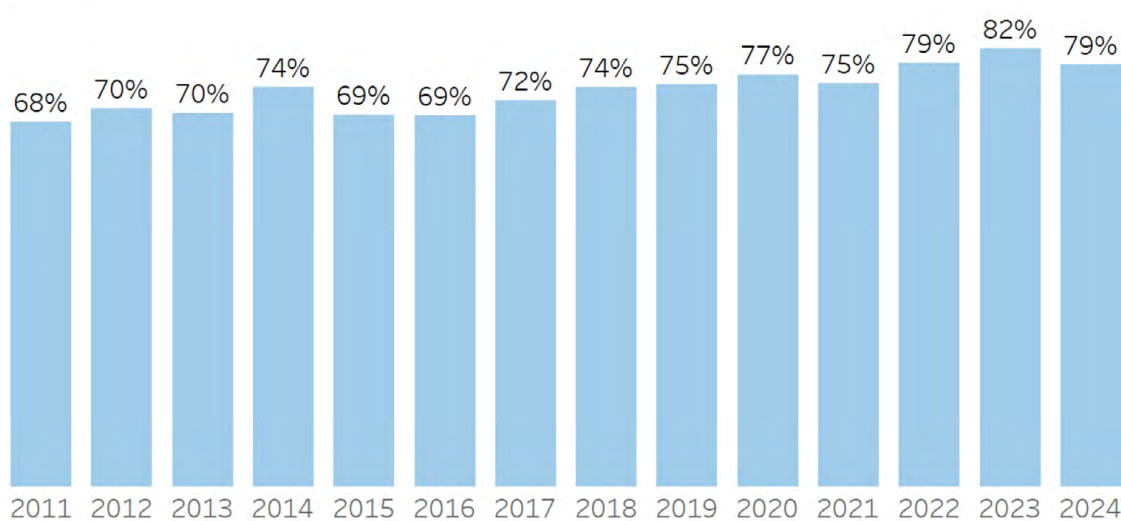


SHOOTING ACCURACY - FROM FREES

The increase in shooting accuracy is most pronounced when it comes to looking at frees. In Championship 2011 frees were scored 68% of the time, while in 2024 they were scored 79% of the time.

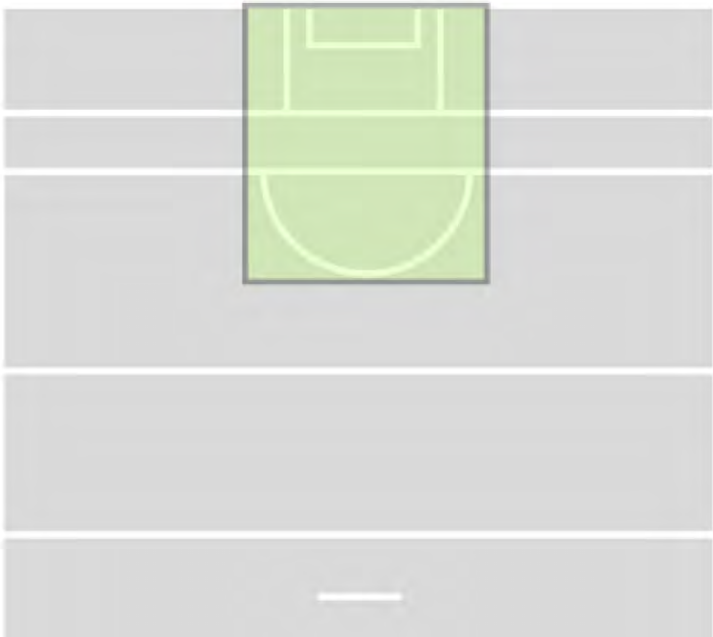
When we consider that the average distance of a shot has not changed dramatically over the last 14 seasons, most if not all this improved accuracy can be attributed to increased player skill.

Championship | Shooting Accuracy Shot Type: From Free



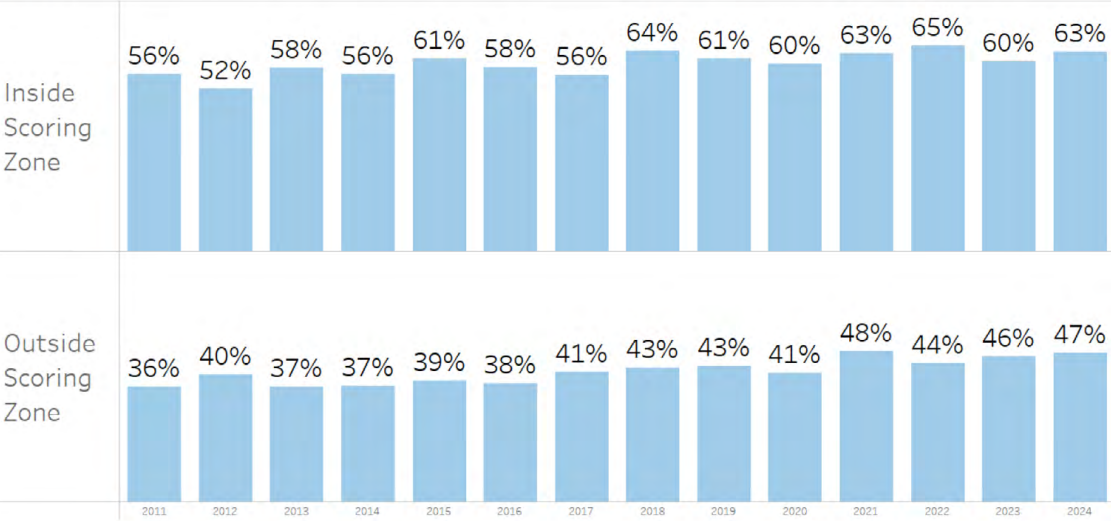
SCORING ZONE

There can be debate about what constitutes the scoring zone. For the purposes of this analysis I have defined the scoring zone as the area covering the D to the end line, as shown in the image below.



Unsurprisingly shot accuracy is much higher inside this zone compared to shots taken from outside. For example in 2024 shots from play inside the zone were scored 63% of the time v 47% outside.

Championship | Shot Accuracy Inside/Outside Scoring Zone

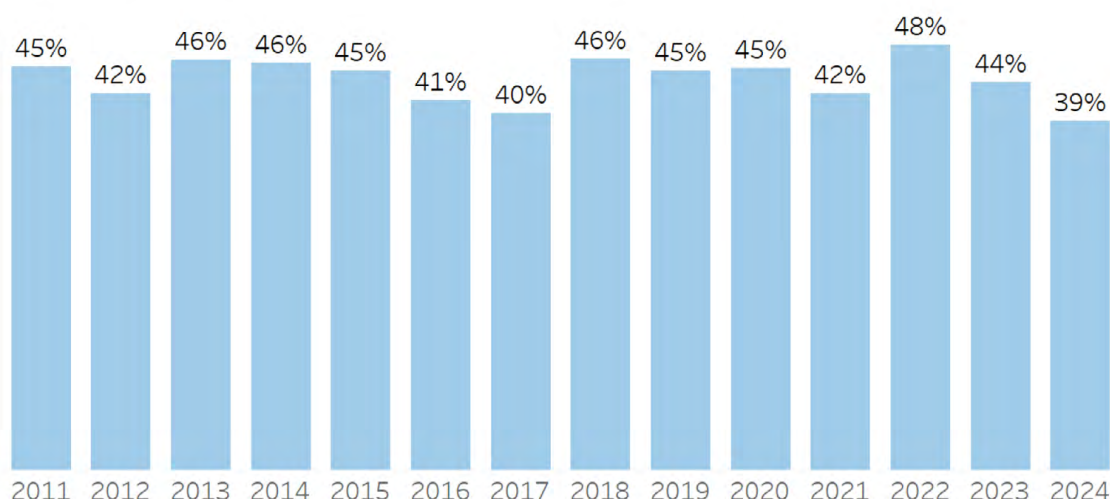


SCORING ZONE - WHERE DO SCORES COME FROM?

Examining only shots from play we can see the percentage of scores that come from inside this scoring zone. So while shot accuracy is better inside, the majority of shots are still taken outside this zone.

The chart below shows the % of scores that come from inside the scoring zone i.e 39% of scores from play in the 2024 Championship were taken from inside the scoring zone.

Championship | From Play % of Scores from Inside Scoring Zone

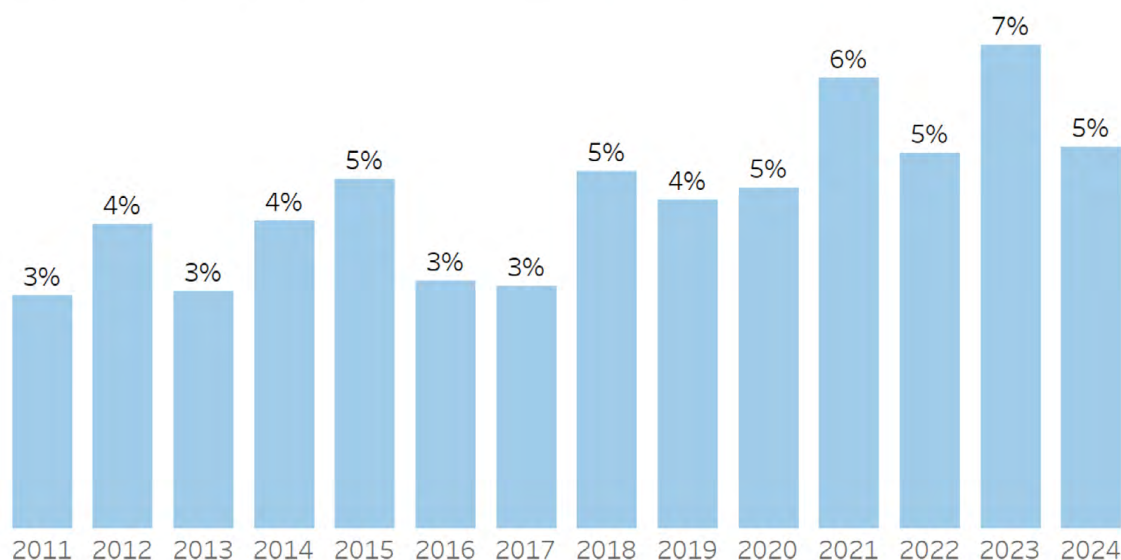


SHOT FOOT/HAND

The analysis below looks at the percentage of scores made with the hand. The majority of shots are taken with the foot, and although relatively small numbers the % of shots taken with the hands in the Championship has almost doubled since 2011.

When we consider that the average distance of a shot has not changed dramatically over the last 14 seasons, most if not all this improved accuracy can be attributed to increased player skill.

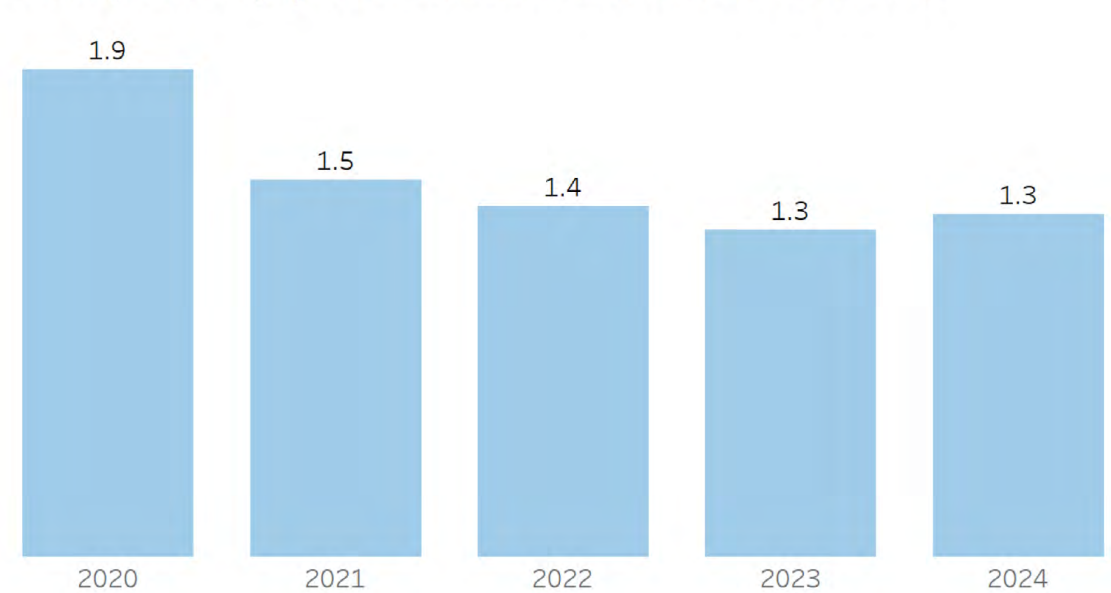
Championship | Scores with the Hand



NUMBER OF CONVERTED MARKS PER GAME

The chart below shows the average number of shots from marks per game. In Championship 2024 there were 40 shots from Marks across the 30 games analysed. Note that this does not include marks where the player chooses to play on, only shots that were taken directly after the mark are included.

Championship | AVG Shots From Mark Per Game



• BACKWARD ATTACKS

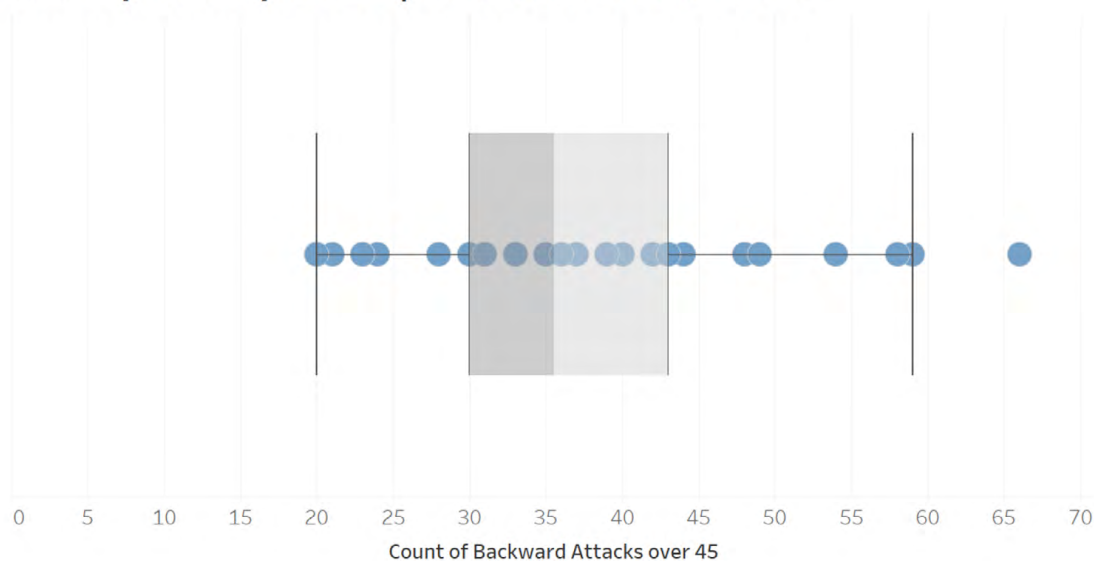
BACKWARD ATTACKS OVER 45

Analysed in just the 2024 season the chart below shows the number of attacks (entries into the 45) where the team then retreated over the attacking 45m line. Although we have no comparison years of data, this analysis seems to concur with the anecdotal view that teams are retreating more than in previous years.

The median value across the 30 games is 35.5 times with a low of 20 and a high of 66.

The chart below shows the % of scores that come from inside the scoring zone i.e 39% of scores from play in the 2024 Championship were taken from inside the scoring zone.

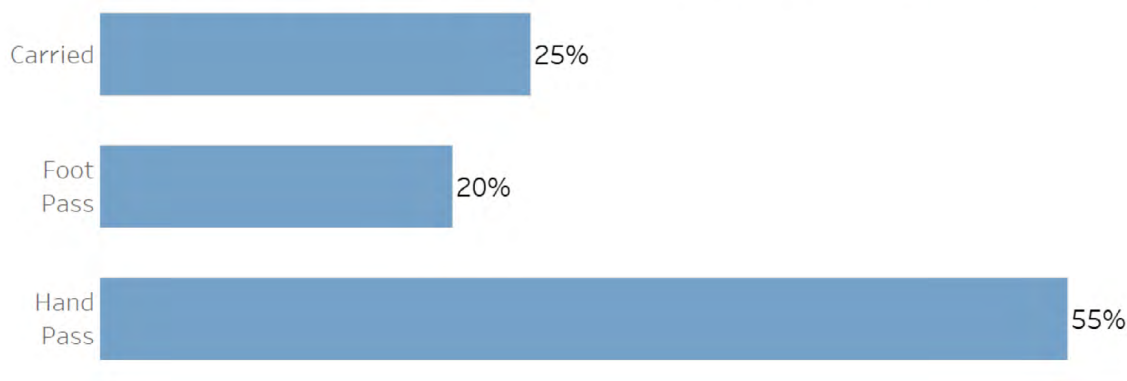
Championship 2024 | Backward Attacks 45



BACKWARDS ATTACK METHOD 45

We can also examine the method (hand, foot or carried) of retreat over the 45m line.

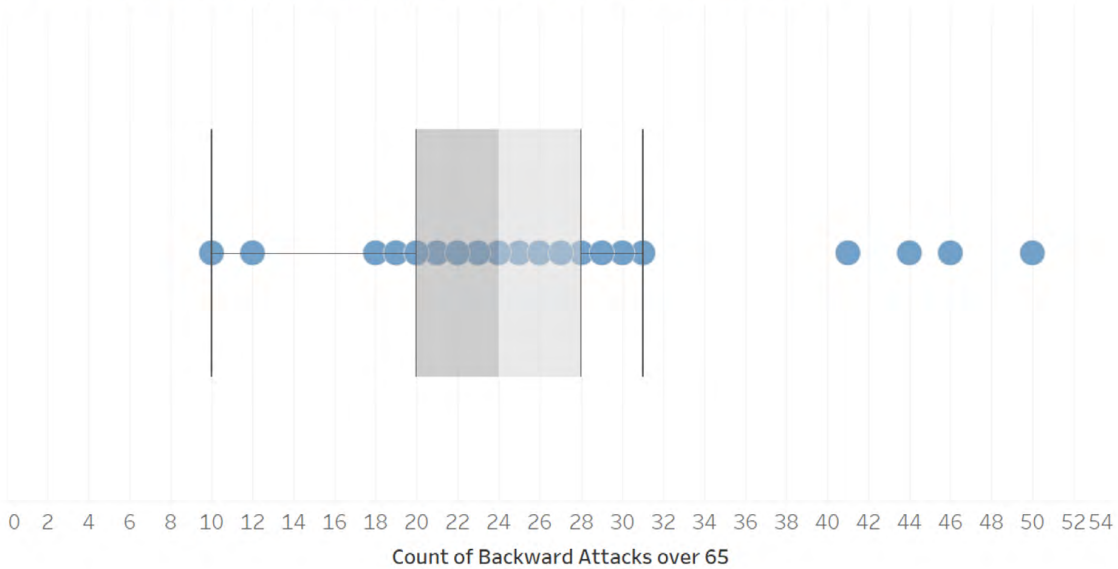
Championship 2024 | Backward Attacks 45 Method



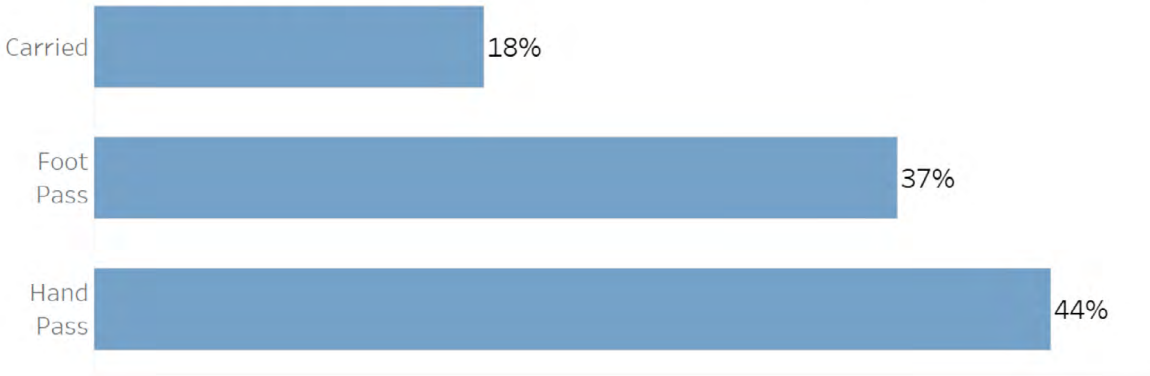
BACKWARD ATTACKS OVER 65

Similarly the chart below shows the number of times the attacking team has entered the opposition 65 only to come back and cross over that line. We see a wider distribution across games here, with a low of 10 and a high of 50.

Championship 2024 | Backward Attacks 65



Championship 2024 | Backward Attacks 65 Method



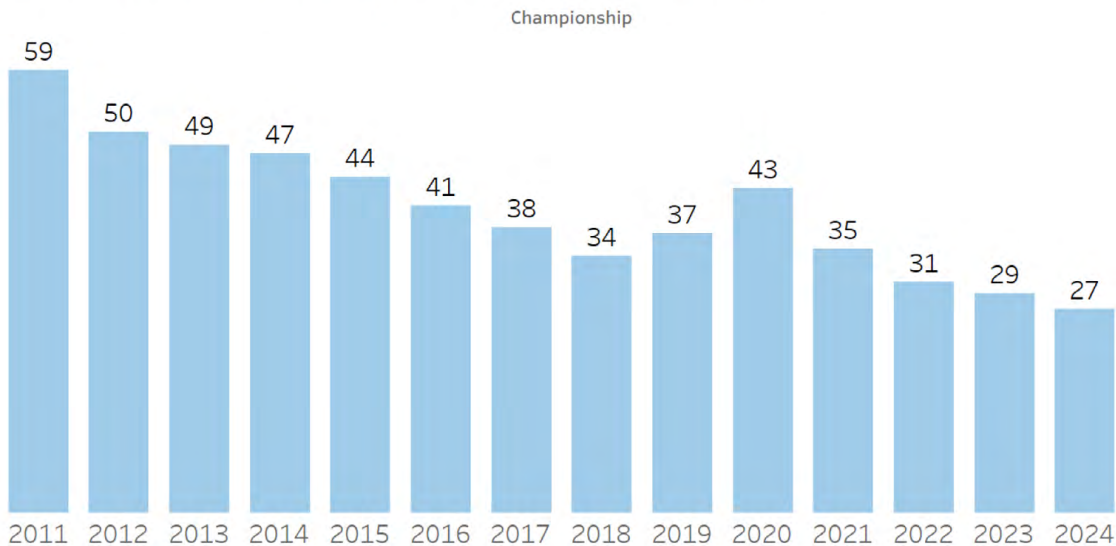
• TURNOVERS

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TURNOVERS/GAME/SECTOR/TIME

A turnover is defined as the team in possession relinquishing the ball to the opponent. This can occur in a number of different ways; Unsuccessful Pass (hand or foot), fouling the ball while in possession and losing the ball in contact.

The chart below shows the average number of turnovers per game across the previous 14 Championship seasons. As we can see this has fallen quite substantially since 2011. There were just 27 turnovers per game in 2024.

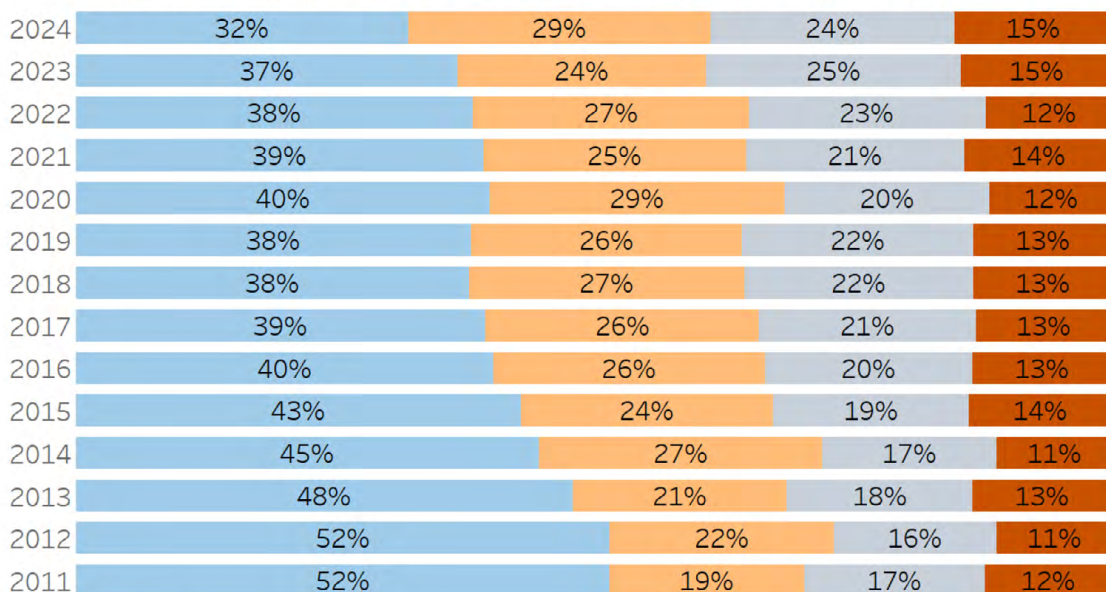
Championship | Avg Turnovers Per Game



TURNOVER BY TYPE

A further breakdown of the turnovers by type shows that about one third of turnovers occur from an unsuccessful kick pass. This is broadly in line with Championship numbers.

Championship | Turnovers % Per Game by Type



Turnover Type

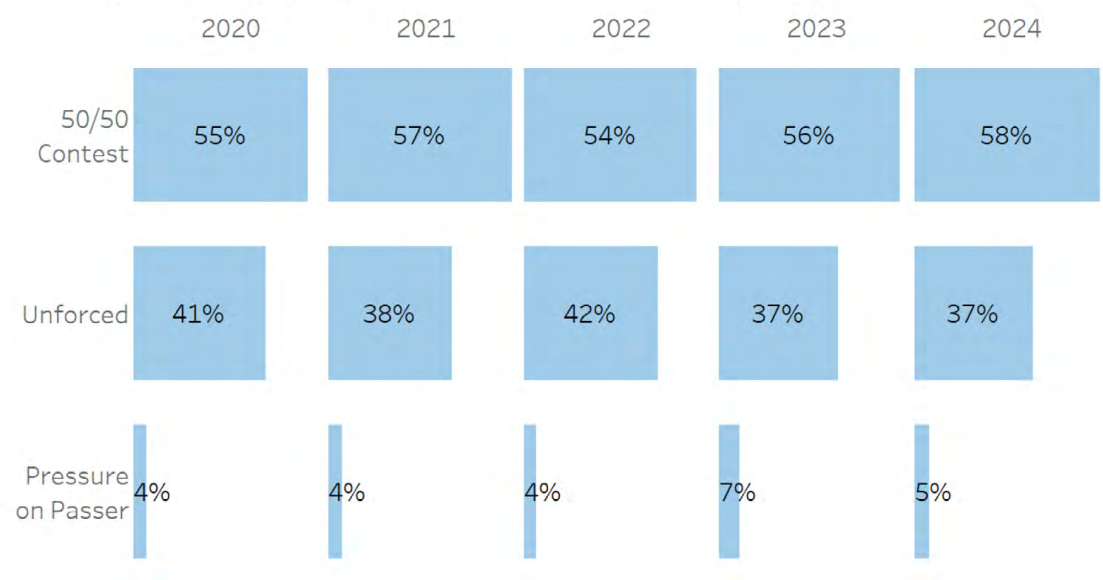
- Foul Against
- HP Unsuccessful
- In Tackle
- FP Unsuccessful

TURNOVERS UNFORCED V CONTESTED

We can single out turnovers from unsuccessful kick passes and examine why they occur. This is broken into 3 main categories. Was the ball kicked to a contest, unforced error or was there pressure put on the passer that forced the turnover.

The chart below shows the breakdown in percentage terms. The largest reason for an unsuccessful foot pass is that it was kicked to a contest.

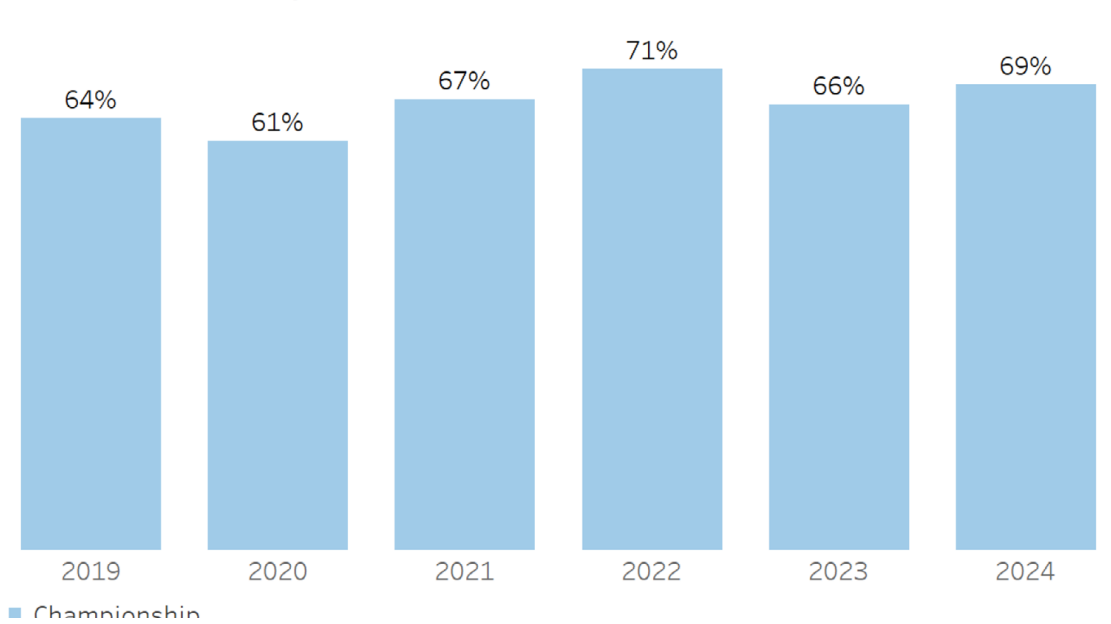
Championship | Foot Pass Turnovers by Type



TURNOVER LOCATIONS

For each turnover lost the XY coordinate is coded. Bucketing these events into the 5 zones (Own 45, Own 45-65, Midfield, Opp 45-65 and Opp 45) unsurprisingly the majority of turnovers lost occur in the oppositions 45. The table below shows the % of turnovers that end in the opposition's 45 from 2017-2024.

Championship | % of Turnovers occurring in Opposition 45

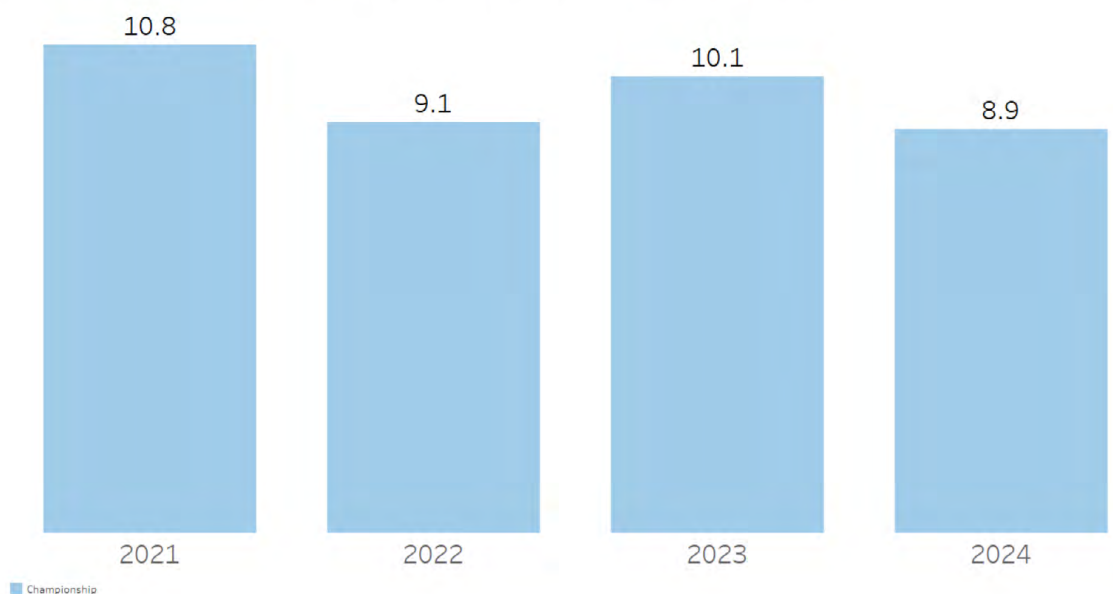


• SUBSTITUTIONS

AVERAGE NO OF SUBSTITUTIONS PER GAME AND WHEN THESE ARE MADE

The chart below shows the average number of substitutions per game (including temp subs).

Championship | Avg Substitutes per game



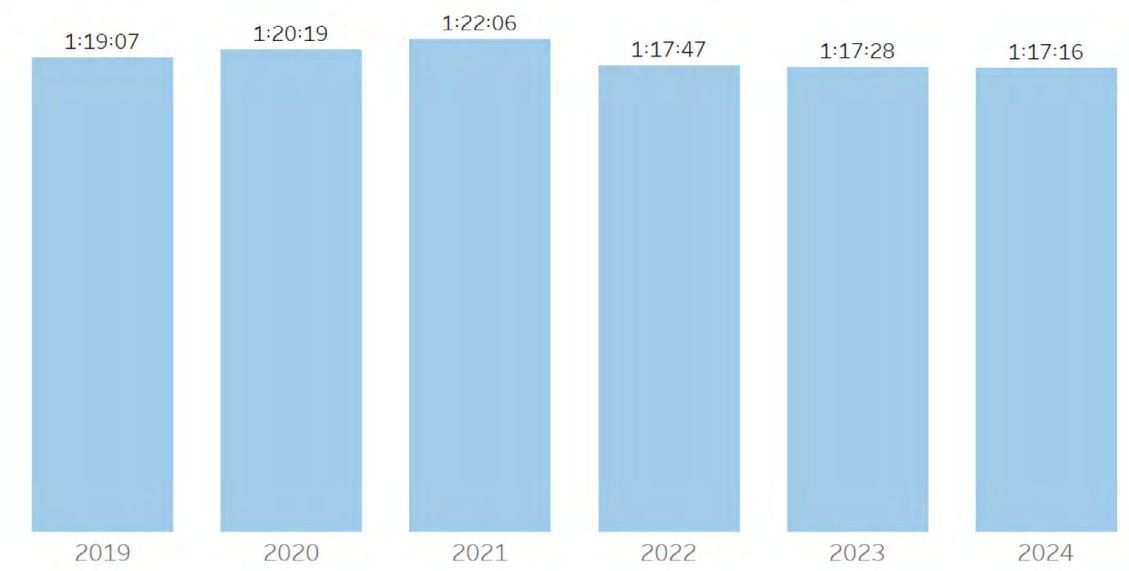
The vast majority of these are made in the 2nd half. On average 1 substitution per game was made in the first half of this season.

• **PLAYING TIME**

DURATION OF TOTAL GAME TIME

The chart below shows the total playable game time on average across the 6 seasons analysed. In 2024 the average game time was 77 minutes 16 seconds, this has been broadly consistent for the last number of years.

Championship | AVG Total Game Time Per Season

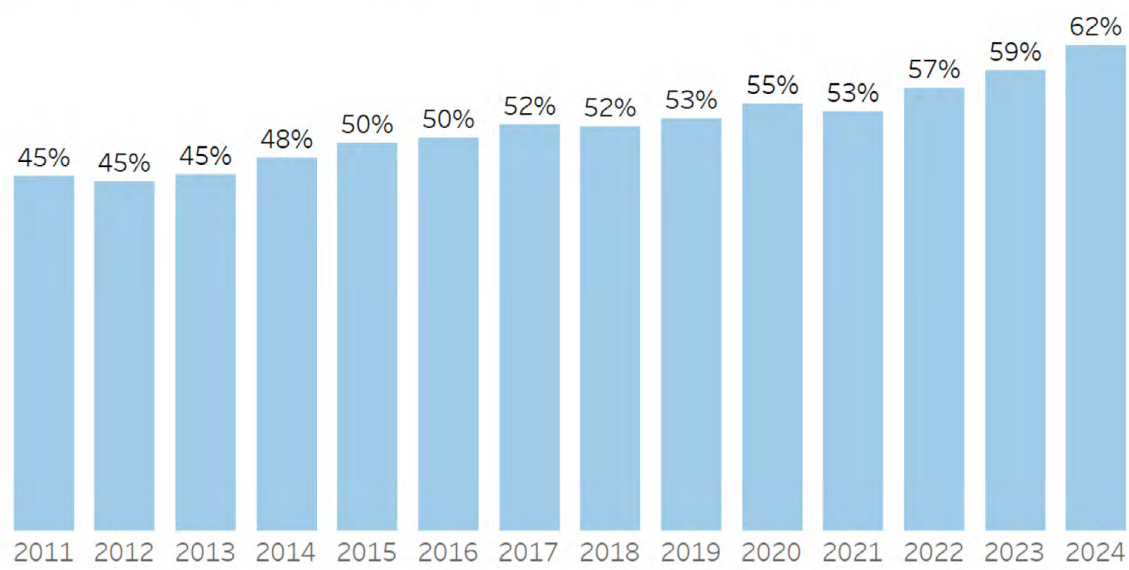


DURATION OF THE BALL IN PLAY TIME

The chart below shows the average ball in play time, this has been increasing year on year since 2011.

Ball in Play time by percentage - Ball was in play for 62% of the game on average in 2024. The % of Ball in Play time has risen from 45% since 2011 to over 60% for the first time.

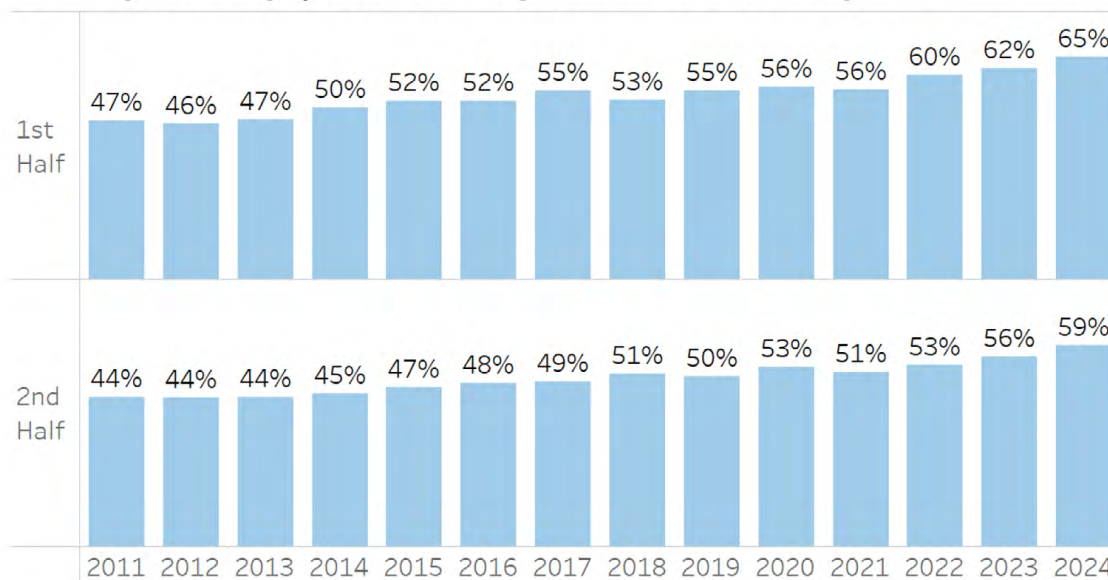
Championship | Ball-In Play % Per Season



PERCENTAGE OF BALL IN PLAY TIME PER HALF

The chart below shows the percentage of ball in play time per half. Perhaps unsurprisingly we can see the ball is in play for a higher percentage in the first half than the second half.

Championship | Ball-In Play % Per Season by Half



• TEAM POSSESSIONS

WHAT IS A TEAM POSSESSION?

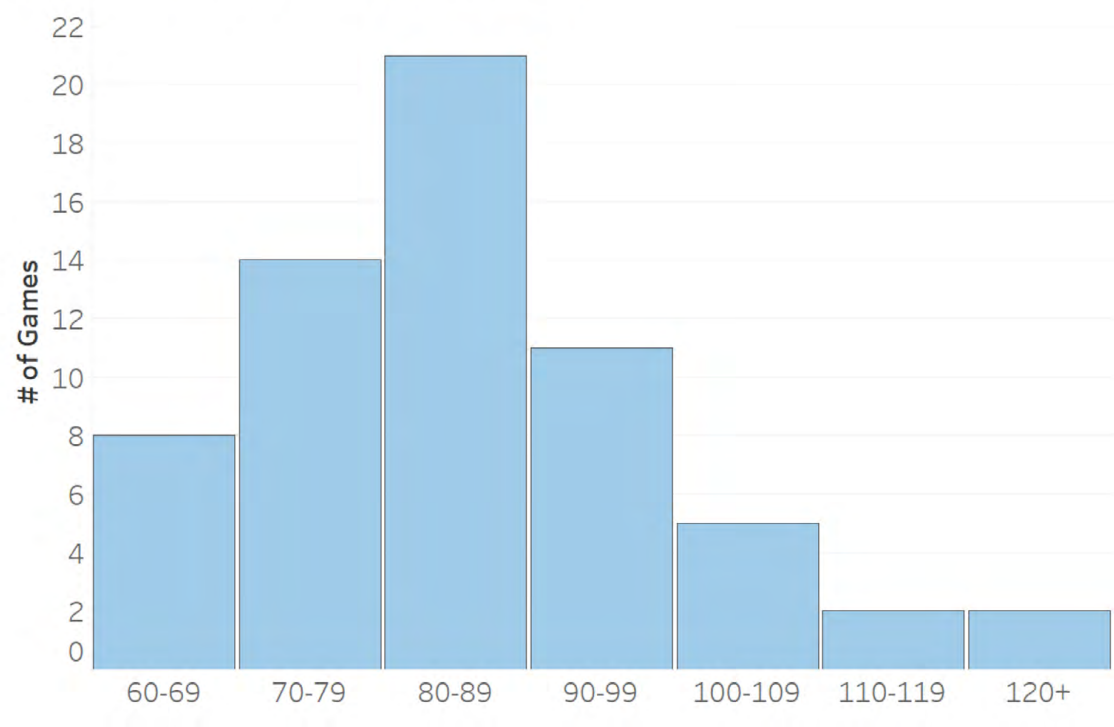
A Team Possession is a passage of play which belongs to one team and is ended by a turnover or a shot. For example, if the team in possession has a shot and it lands short but they maintain possession of the ball the first sequence ends when the first shot is taken and a new sequence begins from the moment they retain the ball.

**Note a Kickout that is lost by the kicking team is not counted as a Team Possession, the possession is counted from the winning of the kickout.*

NO. OF POSSESSIONS PER GAME

The chart below shows the basic distribution of the number of possessions per game, and how often different numbers of possessions occur. Across the 2023 & 2024 Championship matches there are typically between 70-90 possessions per game (35-45 per team). For example there were 21 games that had between 80-89 team possessions.

Total Phases Per Game | 2023 & 2024



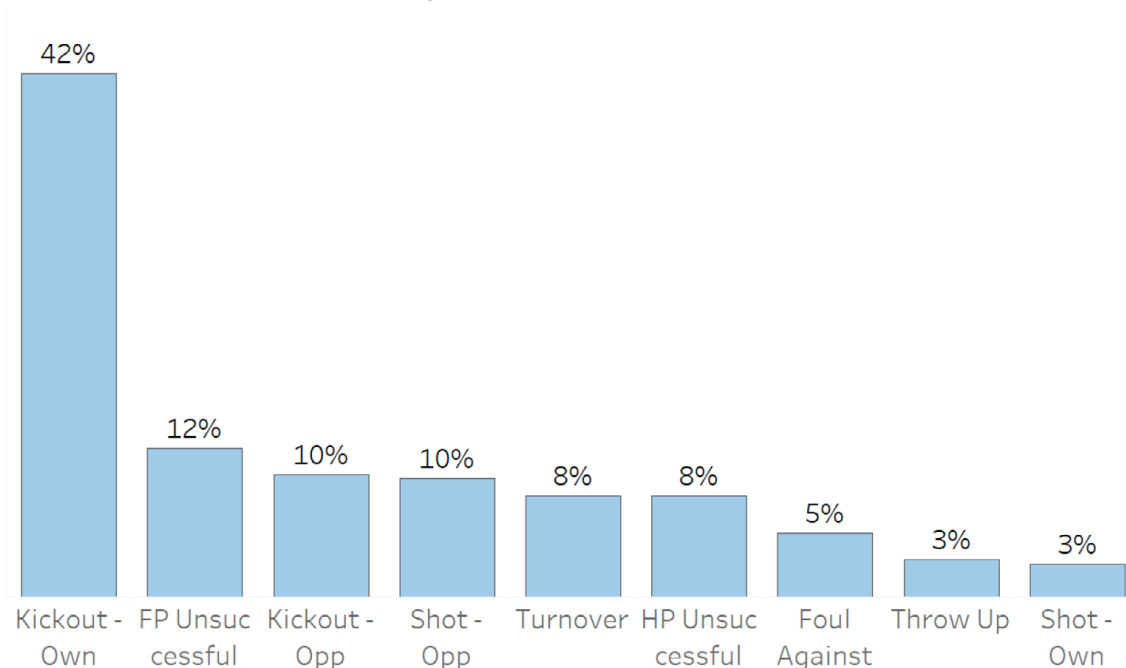
POSSESSION START EVENTS

There are 9 possible ways a team possession can begin;

1. Own Kickout won
2. Opp Kickout won
3. Unsuccessful Foot Pass by the opposition
4. Unsuccessful Hand Pass by the opposition
5. Turnover in Tackle
6. Reclaiming possession from your own shot (where the ball remains in play/results in a 45)
7. Reclaiming possession from an opposition shot (where the ball remains in play)
8. Opposition fouling the ball
9. Throw Up

The chart below shows the distribution of possession and how frequently they start with each event type. i.e The most frequent start of team possession, by a large margin, is winning your own kickout.

Championship 2023 & 2024 | Phase Start Event Occurance

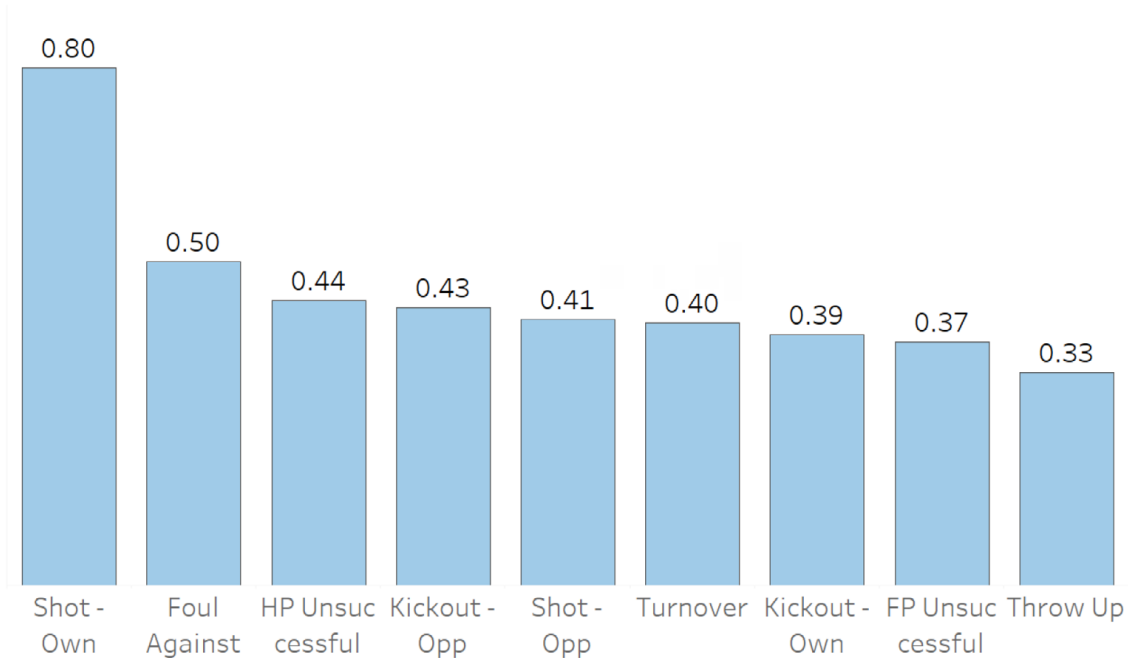


SCORE VALUE OF POSSESSION STARTS

The chart below shows the average score value of each possession start event. The total scores for each event were divided by the total number of team possessions that started via that event.

For example the value of winning an opposition kickout was worth .43 points on average. The value of winning possession from your own shot was 0.80 as you are winning the ball much closer to the opposition goal.

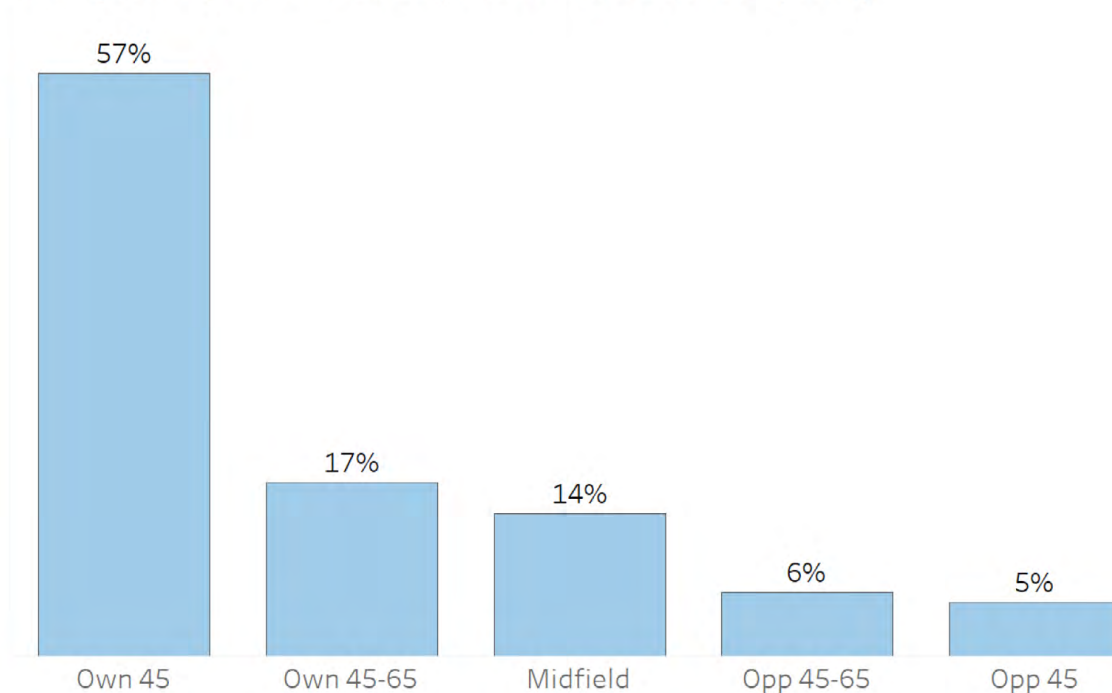
Championship 2023 & 2024 | Phase Start Event v Actual Score Value



STARTING ZONE FREQUENCY

The chart below shows the distribution of the starting zone of each team possession. The pitch is broken into 5 distinct zones, (Own/Opp 45, Own/Opp 45-65 and Midfield). The majority of possession begins inside a teams own 45, perhaps not surprising given the prevalence of short kickouts.

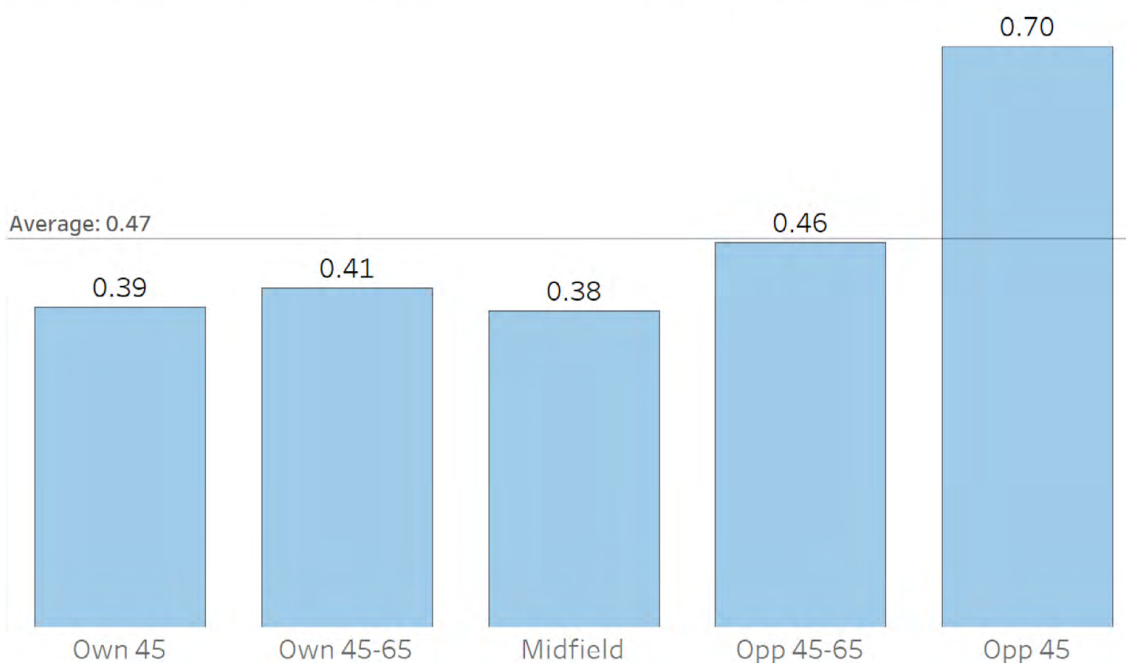
Championship 2023 & 2024 | Phase Start Zone Frequency



STARTING ZONE VALUE

The chart below shows the average score value of each team possession based on the starting zone. Unsurprisingly the closer to the opposition goal the possession starts the higher the possession value. However there are many factors to consider here, and events that start in the opposition 45 are much less frequent ~5% and therefore are more prone to small events having a large impact.

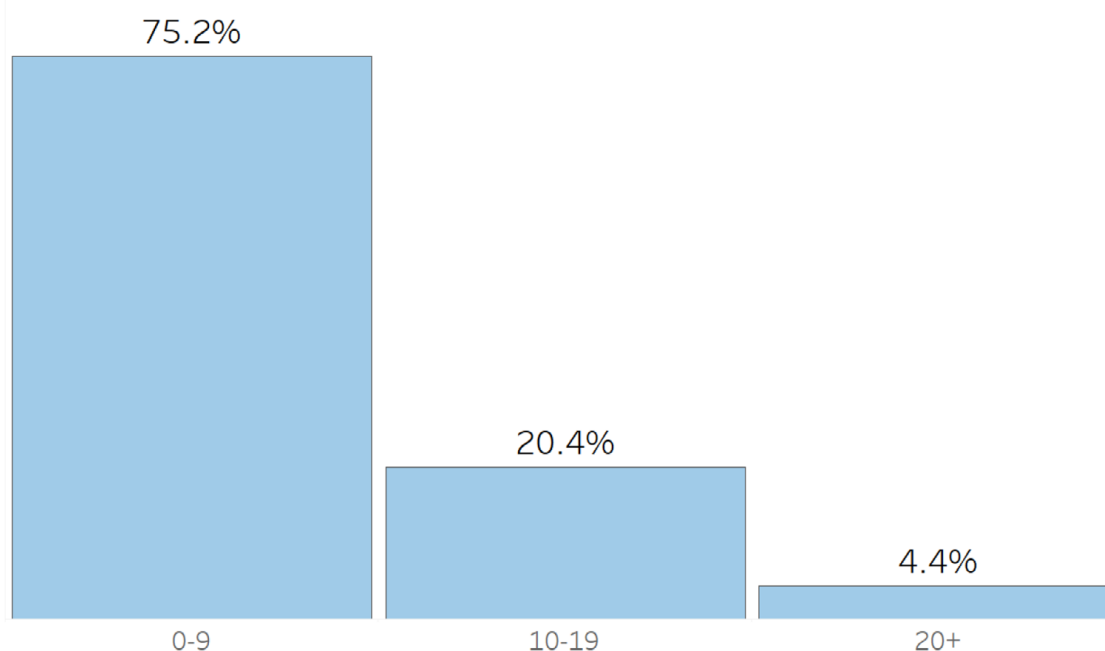
Championship 2023 & 2024 | Phase Start Zone to Avg Points Scored



NO. OF PASSES PER POSSESSION

The chart below shows the basic distribution of the number of passes per team possession, and how often different numbers of possessions occur. As you can see below, the most common possession involves between 0-9 passes. There is a rise in team possessions having 20+ passes from 3.4 to 4.4%.

Championship 2023 & 2024 | No of Passes per Phase





Appendix (vi) Research presentation on possession sequences following throw-ups and turnover



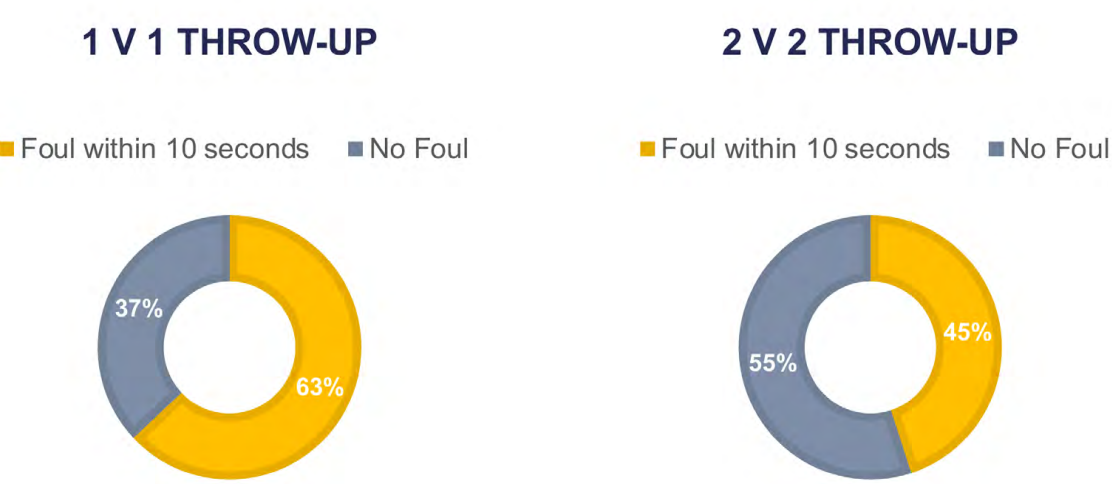
RESEARCH METHODS

- Total of 48 club games involving 67 teams analysed
- Senior county and provincial championship matches
 - 2-year period – 2023-2024
 - 12 matches from each province
 - 1601 turnovers
- 96 2 v 2 throw ups and 38 1 v 1 throw ups

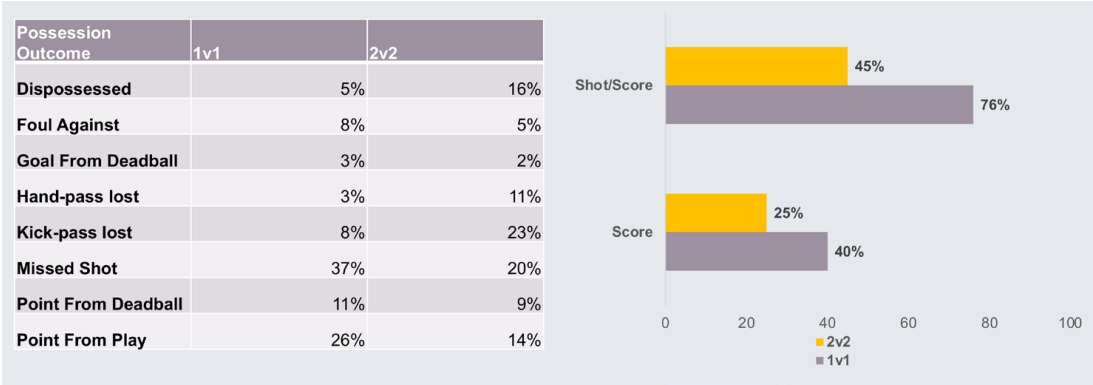
WHERE DO 1 V 1 THROW-UPS OCCUR?



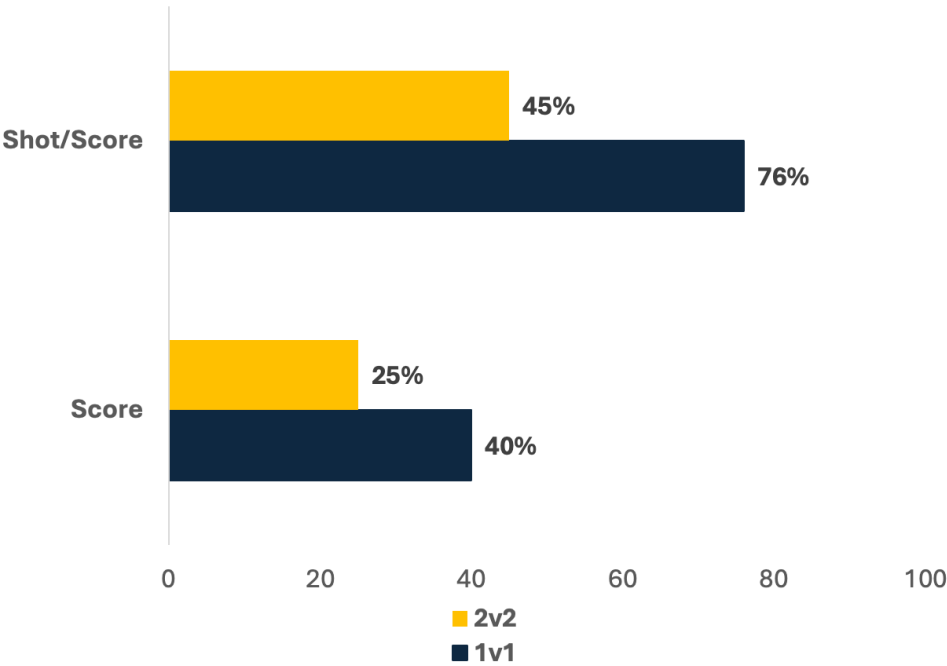
FOULS FOLLOWING A THROW-UP



COMPARISON OF THROW-UP POSSESSION OUTCOMES



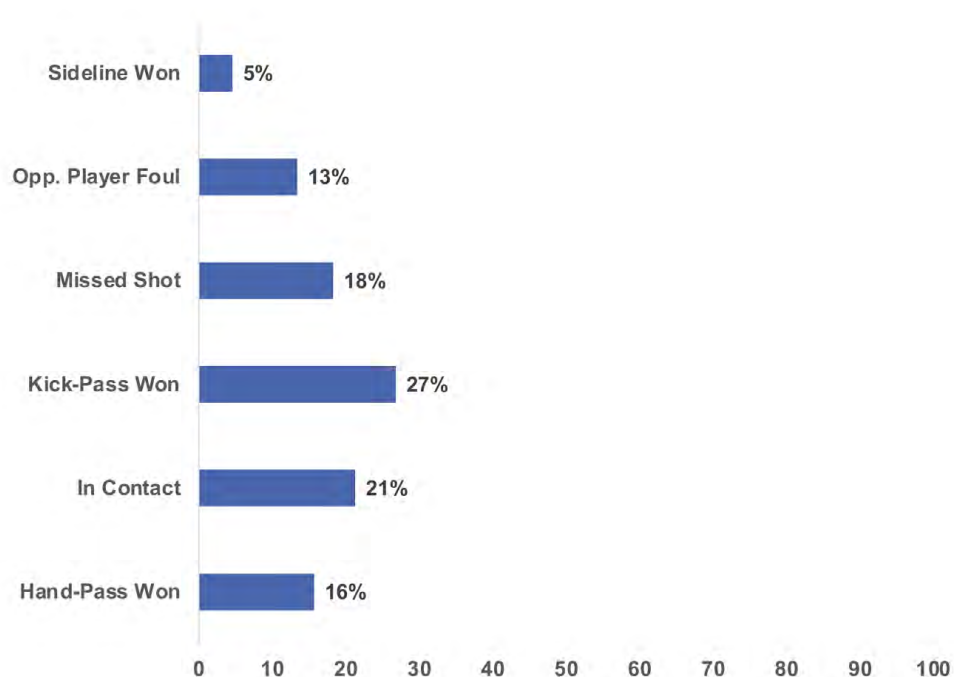
PERCENTAGE OF SCORES AND SHOTS AND SCORES FOLLOWING THROW-UPS



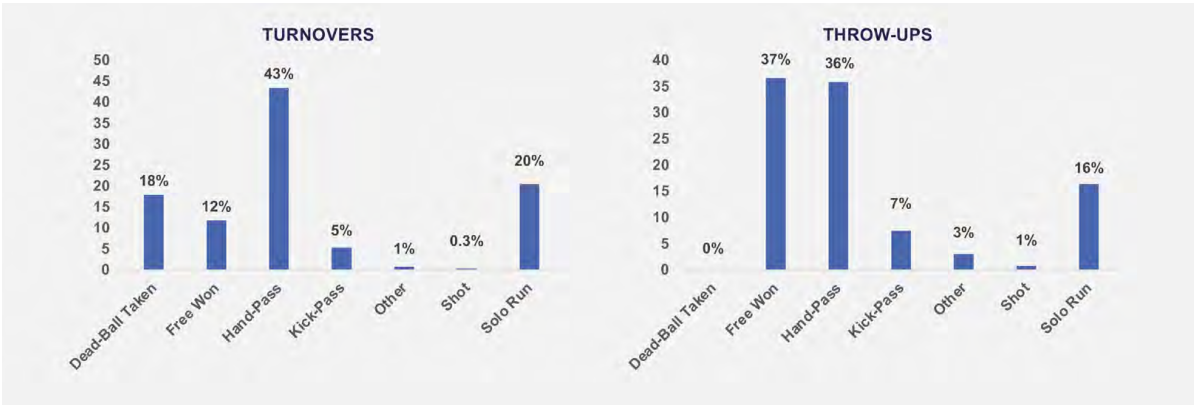
WHERE ARE TURNOVERS WON?



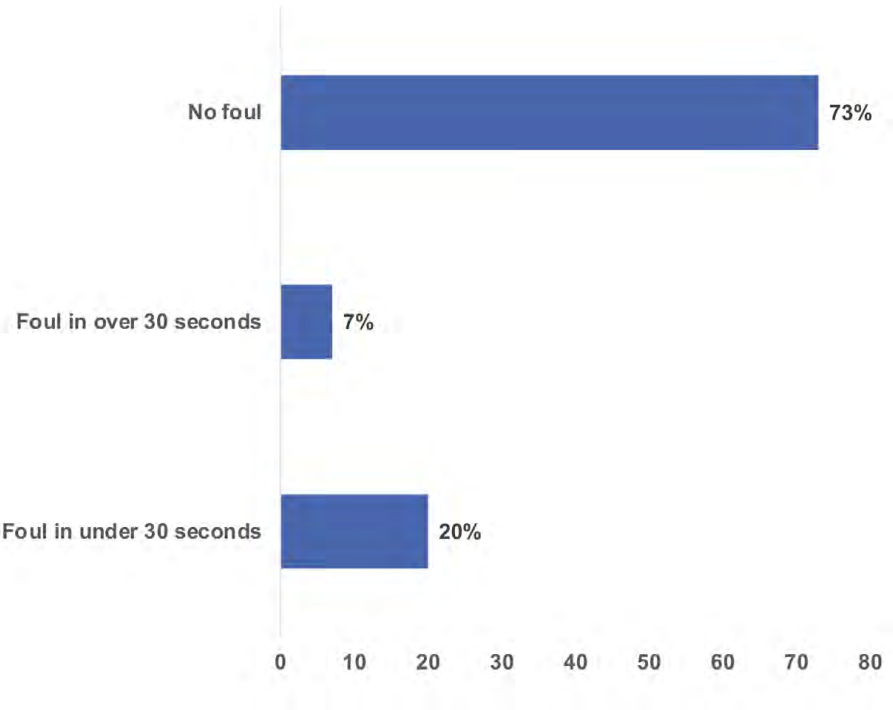
TURNOVER SOURCES



FIRST ACTION AFTER GAINING POSSESSION

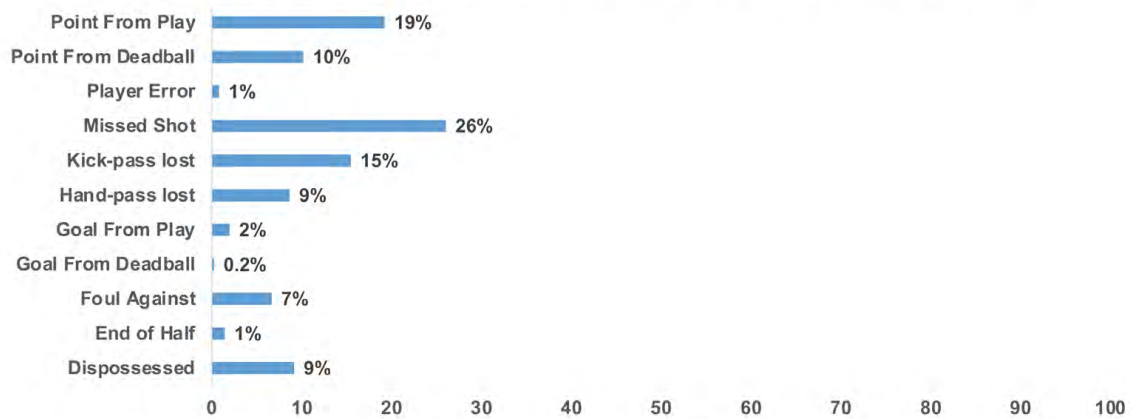


FREES WON FOLLOWING TURNOVERS (NOT INCLUDING FREE WON AS FIRST ACTION)

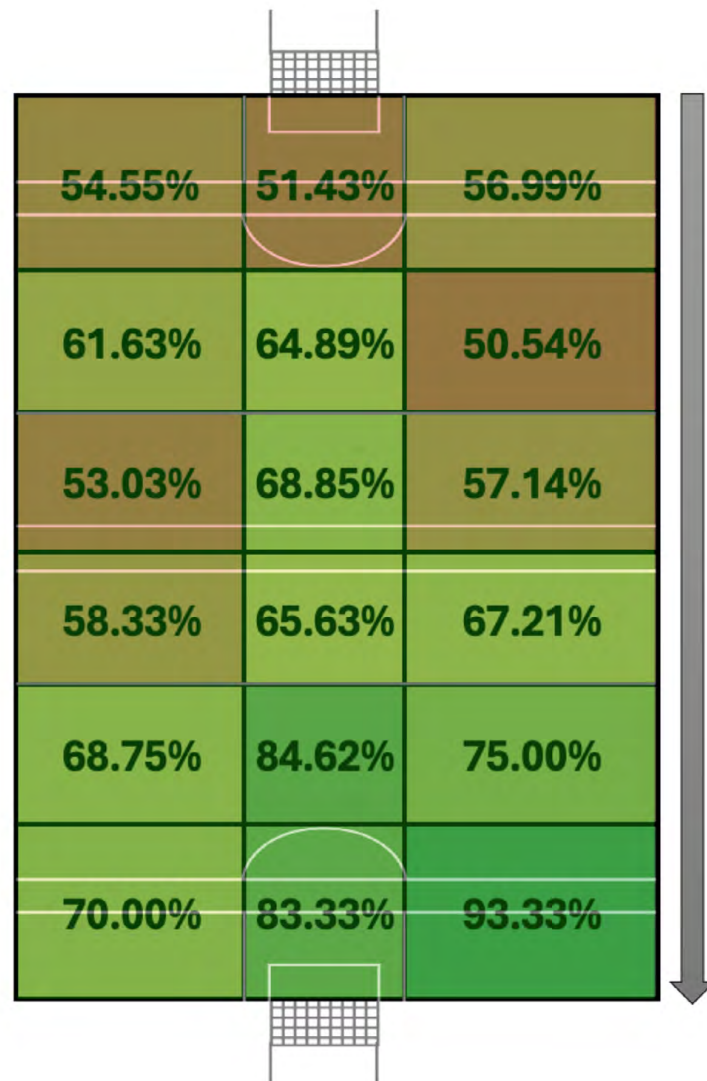


POSSESSION OUTCOME FOLLOWING A TURNOVER

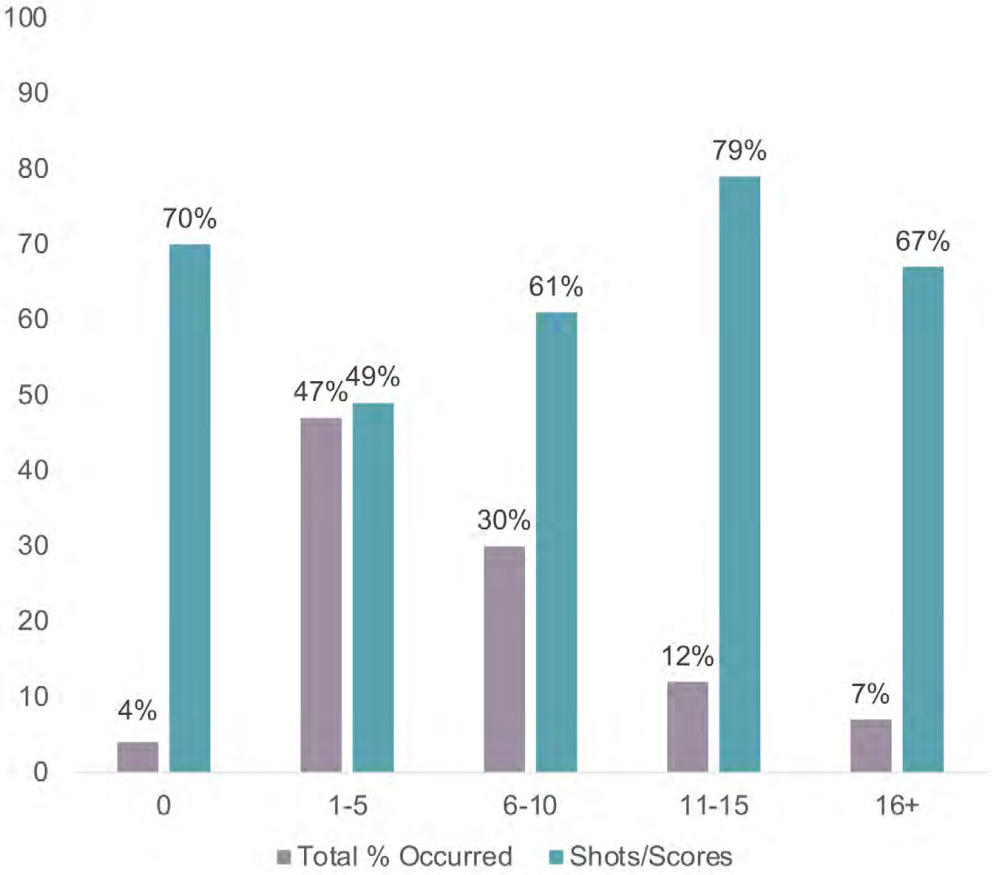
POSSESSION OUTCOME FOLLOWING A TURNOVER



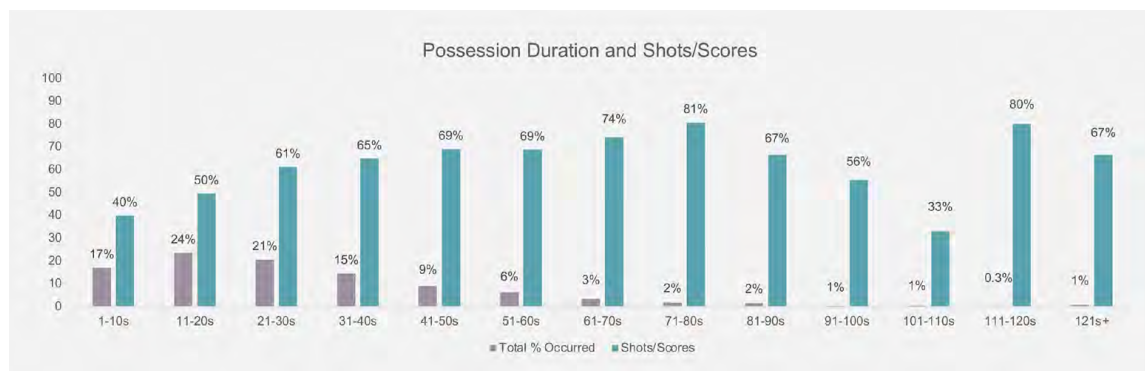
TURNOVER SOURCES



SHOTS AND SCORES FROM NUMBER OF PASSES



SHOTS AND SCORES FROM POSSESSION DURATION



FRC

2024/2025

MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

“Scores from significant range are worth more points (2 points)”.

“Referee should be allowed to give a black card for any foul that he/she deems is cynical i.e. denying a breakaway or a clear scoring opportunity. Teams are consistently cynically fouling but not tripping or pulling down so technically these aren’t black card offences”.

“A faster game where frees can be taken immediately rather than allowing the opposition time to set up and thus the attacking team lose the advantage of having been awarded a free. Better application of the advantage rule”.

“Either increase the steps to 6 or 8 or enforce the four steps rule”.

“I’d sum it up by saying I’d like to see 2 teams to go at each other & try to win the game from start to finish. It’s gone like soccer now, stay in it until the last 10 & then try ‘nick it’. Football isn’t a possession game it’s a raucous, chaotic, physical, end to end game & that’s what we’d like to see more”.

FRC

2024/2025

