

David Baldie

Development Fund Update

Australian Football (sometimes known as Aussie Rules or just Footy) is a fast paced, full contact sport played with an oval ball, with no offside rule and no protective equipment. It may look similar to sports like Rugby, but it's a completely unique game.

There are over 20 countries in Europe that play the sport with four governing bodies covering the UK, AFL Scotland, AFL Wales, AFL England and AFL Ireland govern the whole island of Ireland.

Footy has been played in Scotland since 2003, and now has 6 men's teams competing annually in the Scottish Australian Rules Football league (SARFL) and 4 women's teams in the SARFLW.

Scottish players are eligible to play for the senior men's team the Scottish Clansmen and senior women's team the Scottish Sirens. The national teams compete annually in the AFL Europe Euro Cup, in June 2022 this tournament will come to Scotland for the first time in 10 years and will see squads from all over Europe play under the shadow of the Wallace monument in Stirling.

I started playing footy after I came back from a holiday to Australia in 2013, the sport and community could not have been more open and welcoming. I was a bit nervous to say the least playing my first game and still remember the first bump I took, but I haven't looked back, I've been lucky enough to win a premiership in 2016 and represent my country on three occasions.

In 2018 I was elected as AFL Scotland president, and I'm very proud of what we have done as an organisation during that time, introducing several inclusivity initiatives, winning the bid to host the Euro Cup and launching a fully coded women's league. The sport has a bright future ahead of it.

Now my playing days are getting slightly further behind me I'm focussed on other activities such as managing the Clansmen and also umpiring.

Footy is still a minority sport in Scotland and whilst there are plenty of people looking to play and coach the game, we have always struggled with recruiting umpires this is mainly due to the knowledge gap of the sport in the country.

With the support of HASSRA I have been able to advance my umpiring skills and experience, I recently travelled to the Home Nations Cup in Belfast, this gave me an opportunity to umpire international level games. This was the first international matches that any of the UK & Irish nations had played since 2019. There was a great atmosphere with the Irish women's and Northern Irish men's squads coming out on top. The skills learned at that tournament are transferable to my domestic leagues and I hope to continue my own development to help others develop their skills, hopefully leading to a larger pool of officials.

I love talking about footy so if anyone is looking for more information about how to get involved just drop me a line and I'll be glad to help.