

RAF FA – The RAF Astra League



This league was the brainchild of Flight Lieutenant Sam Taylor and has been thought about and discussed for the last few years. The idea of the league was to raise the standard of football played in the RAF and to bridge the quite significant gap between station level football and the representative sides within the RAF. Once it looked like there were a significant amount of “Branch/Trade/Professions” teams forming then it was decided to push forward and trial the new Branch/Trade league.

Once the committee was formed, chaired by FS Dave Jennings (RAF Regt) with Sgt Ash Dawes (RAF Fire) as league secretary, different formats were discussed and based on the number of teams available this season, it was decided to conduct a league system with each team playing 6 fixtures (3 home and 3 away fixtures). Once the league fixtures are complete then the top 2 teams will go into a final fixture to decide the winner of the ASTRA league. As this is only a trial season, the league has battled a number of hurdles in setting up the event and committee including, authority, appointing officials and working on the FA’s Whole Game System. The first fixtures started in mid-November and the league is anticipated to conclude in May.

Each home team will organise their own fixture dates, either on a Tuesday or Thursday as to not interfere with the ongoing Inter-Station league and produce an admin order to be submitted to the RAF FA for authorisation. Once authority is granted then the fixture will go onto the FA fulltime, and officials can be appointed.

The 7 teams entered are:

ICARUS (RAF Officers’ Team)
Logs Lions (RAF Logistics)
Aires FC (Air & Space Ops)
RAF PTIs
RAF Police
RAF Regiment
Sparks FC (TG4)



A focus on some of the teams:

RAF Regiment FC



The RAF Regiment FC re-formed in 2016 after 10 years of hiatus. The re-formed committee set about organising around 4 fixtures per season (DRS Limited). The club played fixtures against Army and civilian teams with excellent early success. As the only TG/Branch team at the time, it was difficult for the club to find its feet however they have grown significantly and have challenged some top teams along the way. Notably a 10-1 win over the step 6 side Thetford Town and a 6-2 win over the Army Infantry. The RAF Regt FC competes in the annual Combat cup between the Army Infantry, The Royal Marines and the RAF Regt and now the RAF ASTRA league, extending their annual fixtures to around 8 games.



Aries FC

The Air & Space Ops Branch team, AKA Aries FC were established in 2022 to take part in the newly formed Astra League. The team is run by the following personnel, Sergeant Brad Clasper as Manager, Warrant Officer Dan Jackson as Officer in Charge and Group Captain John Kane as president, there is also a very experienced backroom staff setup including a secretary, 4 x outfield coaches, 2 x GK coaches and equipment managers. The team is made up of players from all around the country, including RAF Akrotiri. Within the team they have a plethora of RAF Senior Representative Players, as well as players who represent the UK Armed Forces.

The Air & Space Ops team is based out of RAF Shawbury in Shropshire, the fixtures will generally be held over a 2-day camp, with a training day on day 1 followed by some team bonding, a light training session on the morning of day 2 followed by the fixture.

Future Plans

In addition to the 7 teams already entered into the Astra League, there are a number of other new Branch/Professions teams forming with the Scribes FC (People Operations Profession) one of the newest teams created. Another team based out of RAF Cosford, they are yet to have trials, but the foundations are being laid to enable progress. If the number of teams does grow, there is potential to form two smaller leagues and have a play-off system to determine the overall winners.

The RAF FA also have aspirations that the Astra League will have a female league with the numbers of players steadily growing, spurred on no doubt by the success of the Lioness' in the Euros in 2022. The RAF Police and Logistics/Movers already have teams that compete at the Festival of Football, whilst the RAF Fire Service complete in the Emergency Services League (<https://www.esfl.co.uk/>) which is sanctioned by West Riding FA.

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