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Scottish Football Association

The Scottish Football Association was founded in March 1873 a few months after the first official international match between Scotland and England on the initiative of the Queen’s Park club and Charles Alcock, Secretary of the Football Association. It is the second oldest football governing body after the FA. Disputes over rules led to a series of meetings with the FA out of which came the International Board in 1887 which was responsible for the Laws of the Game until the emergence of FIFA. Initially the SFA organised the international matches which provided its main source of income and the Scottish FA Cup. Queen’s Park dominated the domestic cup competition, while Scotland lost only four of its first twenty official internationals against England. The SFA’s proselytisation role in Wales and Ireland led to the setting up of similar associations in these countries.

By 1883 there were 11 provincial associations and 133 member clubs including one from Newfoundland. Scottish clubs were initially members of the FA as well and took part in the FA Cup, seven teams playing in 1887.

Though Scots professional players were keenly sought in England, the SFA attempted to stamp out professionalism, T Lawrie, of Queen’s Park, President of the SFA at Annual International Conference held in Glasgow in 1884, moved ‘that all Associations should unite to stamp out professionalism and that all National Associations should recognize penalties inflicted on them.’ By November 1884 moves to legalise professionalism were under way in England but this was not accepted in Scotland until 1893.

The Scottish League was formed in 1890 with eleven clubs, though Renton dropped out so an even number of teams completed the first season. Queen’s Park joined the Scottish League in May 1900 and remains the only amateur club competing in the senior national league competition in Scotland. The SFA presided over largest stadium in the world, Hampden Park, though it was owned by Queen’s Park, with record attendances until overtaken by the Maracana. In 1937, 149,547 watched Scotland play England, and week later 146,433 turned up for the Cup final between Celtic and Aberdeen.

The SFA has had a reputation for conservatism. It was slow to allow managers freedom to pick national teams. Perhaps as a result World Cup results were very disappointing until 1974. Thereafter the national team has regularly qualified for the final stages, though it has not yet managed to get through the first round of the finals.

In 1997 following the success of the Premier League in England ten of the leading Scottish clubs notified the Scottish League of their intention to resign and form a new league. The SFA agreed to approve the establishment of the new league under its auspices in May 1998 and the first season began in August.

By 2000, the SFA had 6,148 affiliated clubs and 135,474 registered players, more than two per cent of the population of the country. The SFA presides over six minor associations for amateur, junior, schools, welfare, women’s and youth football. The SFA
also has almost 2,300 registered referees of whom nearly 200 are on the Senior List. The Scottish Football Association Museum Trust, 1990, was a joint enterprise with City of Glasgow Council to establish what was claimed to be the first national museum devoted to football located in new Hampden Park.

References:
Scottish Football Association, official website.
http://www.scottishfa.co.uk/subscribe/index.htm

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