



Saffron Walden Community FC



CHARTER STANDARD
COMMUNITY CLUB

Essex FA's Charter Standard Club of the Year 2018

PLAYER MATCHING SELECTION PRINCIPLES & POLICY

Saffron Walden Community FC (SWCFC) aspires to generate an atmosphere and environment where young football players can develop their skills and enjoy the game in a friendly, encouraging and safe environment with emphasis on fun, development and fair play. Thus a major objective for the club, and each player age-group within it, is organising children into squads that provide all players equal opportunity to develop their abilities as individuals, while learning the benefits of teamwork and the positive effects of challenge and competition.

From the 2015/16 football season, as a club, we have begun to set and now follow some clearly defined principles on the structure of teams and the framework for the development of players to address this challenge. These principles are driven by our Charter and Community Club status.

The basic principles are:

- **SWCFC provides football to children living in Saffron Walden and the surrounding communities irrespective of football ability.**
- We attempt to match players with other players who are at similar development level and show similar degrees of commitment.
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New children joining

- **All local children regardless of ability will be able to join the club providing that sufficient resources (coaches etc.) are available.**
- Preference in playing squads shall be given to children that were part of the club for the previous season.
- If the squads are all full (see Recommended Squad Sizes below), then a joining child may be able to join the club for training but may not be eligible for matches.
- If enough extra players wish to join, the club will try to create an extra team for training and potentially 'friendly' matches.
- If a child wishes to join the club during the season and there are places within the age group, the coaches of each squad will take the decision on whether they can join one of the squads.
- If the joining player's matching level warrants inclusion in a certain team, but there is only space in another team, then they may join that other team until the next selection matching process i.e. until a time when all players can again best matched.
- Similarly, if it is felt the joining player is not yet ready to play matches they may be invited to train with the club, but not to play matches, until they have achieved an appropriate level to be matched. In exceptional circumstances, existing players who are no longer comfortable and/or are experiencing difficulties playing within the matching system, may, in the best interest of the child, be asked to train only rather than play in matches until they are better placed to do so. This would only happen following consultation with their parents and with the agreement of the Club's Executive Committee.

Recommended squad size (RSS)

- Squad sizes shall be determined by the number of players available to each age-group.
- League requirements regarding squad sizes and the number of substitutes that may be used for each game shall be considered.
- The recommended size of squads is as follows:
 - For U7 & U8 (or for 5 v 5 games) each squad may contain a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 players.
 - For U9 & U10 (or for 7 v 7 games), the minimum RSS is 8 and a maximum RSS of 14.
 - For U11 & U12 (or for 9 v 9 games), the minimum RSS is 10 and a maximum RSS of 16.
 - For U13 & U14 & older, the minimum RSS is 13 and the maximum RSS of 16.
 - * Note: the maximum numbers given above may be exceeded where league rules require or allow.
- Any variation from the RSS's given shall be agreed by all the coaches of the age-group concerned and the Club Executive Committee.

Training players

- Where squads are fully subscribed, a coach may be able to accept a new member as a training player.
- A training player will be required to complete SWCFC registration, but may not be registered to play for the team in any of the local leagues.
- These training players shall be considered for playing squads based on their registration date with the club.
- When a vacancy becomes available in a squad, the coach of that squad then has the option to support the training player towards full membership, so that they are registered with the league and are thus eligible to play in League games or to retain them as a training player only.
- No training player shall be passed over for another training player where they are matched at the same level.

'Playing up' an age-group

- Wherever possible, all children should play in their FA designated age-group and only exceptionally will they be permitted to play in an older age-group.
- No child shall be permitted to play-up two age-groups.
- Children shall not 'play-up' merely to provide an older age-group with a sufficient number of players for that squad.
- For all age-groups, a child shall only be allowed to play-up where:
 - both the parents and the coaches of that child consider them able to deal with the demands of playing in the older group and that the child will greatly benefit from the experience;
 - the child is selected for the most advanced development squad for that older age-group;
 - that squad is playing in the most senior levels of the league (e.g. The 'A' or 'B' Leagues or such equivalent within the given league structure);
 - it is thought that the player concerned will be a key performer within that older group.
- The appropriateness of a child playing-up shall be reassessed each season and it shall not be assumed that because a child played in an older age-group the previous season that this will automatically be followed in the next.

Note: regardless of the above, agreement for a player to 'play up' may be provided in exceptional circumstances by the Club Executive Committee following discussion with the parents and coaches of both age-groups concerned.

Squad structure

- Squads shall always be structured as far as possible so that players are matched with players of similar ability.

- The recommended matched squad naming convention is:
 - Reds (Most advanced players)
 - Blacks
 - Whites
 - Yellows
 - Blues (Least developed players)

Note: this structure and naming convention is not 'set in stone' and some age-groups may elect to operate an advanced team and two or three squads of equal matched standard for example. Any such variations from the recommended matched structure shall be specifically agreed by the Club Executive Committee.

- The rapid nature of development in the younger age groups (at U8s and younger) means that it is possible that the matched squads and players may be amended significantly at the 'winter break' (or similar time in the season) if this is considered appropriate for the individual children.
- Squads for older age groups may change half way through the season on occasion to make minor adjustment for certain individuals but these squads shall normally be fully matched in line with school sports selection processes and shall thus be in place for the whole season.
- Players can request to be transferred between squads at any time, subject to the League rules on player transfers.
- Players can be dual registered for teams in separate leagues to provide cover for absences but not to strengthen a team for a specific match. For example, a player in Cambs. League can also be registered in the Royston Crow League to provide cover for another team. Any such dual registration shall be made known to, and agreed before registration by the Club Secretary.
- Players may be invited to move between any matched squads by their coach, who shall be acting in consultation with the coach of the players potential new squad (See below).
- Players may be invited to join a squad to provide them with a greater challenge than their existing squad by the coach of that group (See below)
- All invitations to change squads after the initial selection process has been announced shall be made via the Club Executive Committee to the player and their parents, after discussion between all of the coaches involved.
- Parents can request that their child play in a different squad via the Club Executive Committee. In such circumstances requests for a player to play at a lower development level shall usually be agreed except where this causes significant disruption to the balance of the squads across the age group. A request for a child to play at a higher level shall be granted where it does not cause disruption to the balance and empathy of the squads for that age-group and only where the coach of the receiving (new) squad agrees.

Selection groups

- Squad selection at the start of a season will wherever possible be undertaken by the coaches who have previously worked with the children in the given age-group. These shall provide the core of selection group.
- Club Executive Committee members (who have knowledge of the players); potential new coaches that may be joining the coaching team; and parents of players may also be used where considered appropriate.

Selection method

- The process to be followed shall be flexible and determined by the selection group for each age-group, but shall consider the club's selection method guidelines given (see below).
- Where the selection method cannot be agreed by the coaches the selection method shall be determined by the Club Executive Committee and shall generally follow the guidelines given.

Selection method guidelines

- Preference is that the coaches shall independently assess the individual players.

- Comparison of these assessments shall then be used to determine squads, with the Club Executive Committee mediating if necessary.
- **At no time should a selection process or method be followed that places unnecessary pressures on the children as individuals or as a group.**
 - Trial games shall not normally be used to determine squads except where assessment over the longer term is not possible e.g. Where squads are newly formed or a large influx of players has been experienced for that age-groups.
- **At all times through the selection process consideration of the individual child's welfare shall be paramount.**

Equal Playing Time (EPT)

- The club has a philosophy of “Equal Playing Time”.
- For mini-soccer close to equal game time should be applied for all players attending a match.
- For all age-groups EPT may be applied over the season, not necessarily to a particular match.
 - This means that less developed players within a squad may be given extended time in the less competitive games and vice-versa.
- EPT will likely force a coach to make team changes when they may not otherwise want to based on present game performance of the players or the team.
 - To reduce the impact of this, for the younger age groups in particular, substitutions shall be thought out and planned before the game starts. This makes awareness of player attendance very important and parents should be particularly aware of this to assist the coach with this aim. Failure to provide this information may mean that coaches may choose to retain a planned team structure for the game such that EPT may not be achieved.
- Goalkeepers, given the specialist nature of their position, may be given extra overall playing time compared to outfield players to allow them on-field playing time where the coach considers this appropriate.
 - Similarly players 'deputising' in goal may also be given longer total playing time on match days so as not to impact their on-field playing time unfairly (again where the coach considers this appropriate).
- For all age groups there may be occasions when EPT is inappropriate or simply cannot be achieved due to unplanned events.
 - At such times coaches should abide with the spirit of this philosophy as best possible.
- Where league rules require that all registered players should attend matches when available, such requirements shall be followed.
 - Absent of this, for 11-a-side matches, it is recommended that the coach should select no more than 16 players to attend a game. This will likely require rotation of “rested” players if all players are available.
- We do seek to be a competitive club so in certain key games EPT may not be followed at the coach's discretion.
 - Players (and parents for younger age-groups) shall be advised of such decisions in advance of the game.
 - Where possible all players attending the match should receive a reasonable amount of pitch time.

Other selection and matching matters arising

For any other matters arising in relation to the policy and/or principles to be followed, as regards player selection or matching, not covered above, please refer to the Club Executive Committee.

Review of selection and matching principles & policy

The principles, policy and process followed by club in respect of selection and player development level matching shall be subject to review and change by the Club Executive Committee. Any amendments required to the existing published positions shall be agreed by the Club Executive Committee and advised to members accordingly.