



Grading Policy

Background

New Lambton Football Club, (NLFC), evolved in 2010 from the rapidly expanding New Lambton Junior Soccer Club, (NLJSC), to encompass Women's, All Age & over 35's teams.

In both guises, the club has operated successfully with a family based ethos providing a sporting, recreational and social environment for those interested to learn, participate, develop and enjoy the global game of football.

This ethos will continue to be the foundation from which the club will build.

Despite more than 90 years of club association, NLJSC remained a relatively small operation, generally fielding one team per age group in competition years (10 and up), with stagnant numbers providing our U6-U9 teams.

Surrounded by larger clubs within a 5km radius in Lambton, Adamstown & Kotara, NLJSC, found competition for playing numbers and sponsors, just as competitive as games on the park & thus some core decisions were made around the future of the club.

The most important was the move from Alder Park to Novocastrian Park in 2009.

The move here provided us with the scope for growth and development & also enabled us to provide a better quality of facilities & infrastructure with which to offer our players.

A name change in 2010, to NLFC, aligned the club to the parent associations of Newcastle Football, Northern NSW Football & the Football Federation of Australia & removed the term soccer from our official acknowledgements, (although we continue to enjoy & embrace the term soccer in all of our discussions).

Since 2008, the club has experienced rapid growth, thanks to the work and commitment of its committee, coaches, parents & sponsors.

This growth peaked in 2010, where NLFC had the highest number of participants in Small Sided Football, SSF, (U6 – U9's), of all clubs in the Newcastle Association.

This upward spike in numbers aligns to the continual increase & popularity for football within Australia on the back of the implementation of the A League and our Newcastle Jets, and the recent success of the Socceroos.



Grading / football structure

As part of positioning ourselves to further player development, the club has looked at various options around junior team formation.

At NLFC, junior team structure was always something that attempted to balance the desire for player development, with a balance of teams/players into appropriate skill levels, whilst maintaining the fun of playing with school friends/new friends & social groups.

Grading of players based on competition and the interpretation of skill levels was hampered to some degree by the differing football structures that our players were presented with.

In 2006, SSF was implemented as the mandatory playing model for players from U6's. This meant that the U7's in 2006, continued to play under a different & now defunct model known as Roo Ball.

SSF places the focus on participation & enjoyment with the concept designed to aid in the development & skill awareness of players, (small field, and minimal playing numbers). There are no competitions & no formal grading until U11/12.

Our players who continued in the Roo ball concept therefore became our first graded sides since the change to NLFC & as such a tentative approach was undertaken to ensure that players were aligned to the other clubs who also played under this split SSF / Roo Ball structure up to U12's.

Starting in 2009, NLJSC opted to trial the "A Team" concept for under 9's and under 10's.

This evolved successfully in 2010 to include our U10's & U12's.

The overall aim of this concept was to offer players the opportunity to try out for a team for each age group to compete at higher levels of competition.

During this time, our SSF players progressed into their varying levels of game initiation based on expanding team numbers & field size.

We are extremely proud of the way that our committee & coaches have worked with the governing bodies to now be able to start to see the increased level of skill development that our SSF players have acquired, with a view that these players will eventually take part in our grading process in coming years.

The club's overall policy is that tryouts for any "A Team", although encouraged, is done on a voluntary basis, subject to the rules and procedures set out below.

Skills matching – SSF in 2012

As a new initiative for 2012, and to attempt to balance some lopsided results amongst our U10 & 11 SSF teams, Newcastle Football has asked clubs to rate teams within these age groups based on skill set.

This move is designed to attempt to group teams of like ability from neighbouring clubs with each other.

In 2012 NLFC will be liaising closely with its U10 & 11 coaches/parents to consider these rankings, with the view at all times that this age group continues to focus on fun & development.



Competition Grading - Objective

The fundamentals of the grading policy are designed to ensure that:

- All players have the opportunity to play in a competitive environment, appropriate to their skill in a division best suited to their ability.
- Players learn from their peers and develop an appreciation and love of the game.
- Players, coaches and parents alike, have FUN, enjoy the season, and return to the club year after year.

Team grading

In 2012, Northern NSW Football Association requires interdistrict clubs to nominate teams in graded competition from U12's and up into divisions according to their ability. This is done at the beginning of each season by a member of the committee in consultation with coaches and managers.

Considered factors for team grade nomination include:

- Previous year performance
- Experience and skill level of players within the team
- Requests and information from team coaches and managers

Note: Grades nominated by NLFC may not always match the actual grade allocated by Northern NSW. Many factors influence the final grading of teams within the interdistrict competition.

“A Team” Grading process

Where sufficient players nominate, formal grading session/s will be held in a period decided upon by the Grading Committee each year, usually aligned to the return to school after Christmas.

Dates, times and locations are published before and on the registration days.

The grading process may also include participation in pre-season trials games.

All players must be registered as NLFC players before they are eligible to take part in “A Team tryouts session/s.

The following is the process to be followed:

1. The club committee will, wherever possible, appoint the team coach prior to the commencement of the grading process.
2. To ensure an unbiased selection of players, an independent grading panel shall be appointed by the club committee, with such committee providing a mix of prior coaching & playing experience at varying levels.
3. Players and parents will be provided with a letter (see appendix 1) outlining the main aspects of the grading process and the responsibilities of graded players.



4. Players are required to attend grading session/s plus pre-season trials unless otherwise advised by the grading panel.
5. Players who are unlikely to be selected will be advised by the grading panel as early as possible in the selection process and where possible prior to muster day.
6. In circumstances where players are of similar ability, selection preference will be given to players who played with the club in the previous football season.
7. The grading panel will promptly advise the registrar which players have been selected, so that other players can be allocated to other teams as necessary.
8. Names of successful players will be placed on the club website, with the coach also calling each player individually to congratulate them & welcome them to the team
9. It is always our intention to ensure that a player has every opportunity to play, thus any reallocation to other teams is done in consultation with parents.

Players who wish to try-out for “A Team”

Following are conditions that graded players and parents will be required to comply with:

- Players and parents are to comply with the club’s Code of Conduct.
- Players are selected into a team, not a position. A player’s position may be changed to suit the needs of the team.
- Training may be scheduled twice weekly. Players are expected to attend both sessions, wearing appropriate training gear. Boots and shin pads are compulsory. Junior players are to be accompanied by at least one parent/carer at training and at games.
- All players are expected to participate positively and enthusiastically at training and comply with the directions of the coach and/or manager.
- If a player continually disrupts a training session the player may be asked to leave that session. If such disruption recurs on a regular basis, the player may be dropped from the team.
- The coach is not to be questioned during the match. The coach may be approached privately after the game has finished.
- Players are obliged to notify the coach/manager as early as possible if they are unable to attend training or a game. It is the responsibility of the parents of junior players to comply with this requirement.
- Any disputes regarding either the grading process or unfair treatment of a player during the season should be referred to the committee through the club’s disputes process.

Players not choosing to tryout for “A Team”

Players who do not wish to be considered for grading will be placed in teams by the registrar. Where possible the player’s wishes regarding which particular team he or she wants to be placed in will be taken into account, subject to team numbers.

Balancing of Team Numbers

Balancing of team numbers in the first few weeks after registration is sometimes required due to players dropping out for varying reasons. These circumstances are unfortunate and mostly unavoidable.



Disputes and final grading decisions

The club committee makes the final decision regarding any grading matter, in accordance with the normal procedures set down in the club's policies and procedures.

“A TEAM” Tryouts Grading Criteria

Player Grading shall be a two stage process consisting of Basic Skills assessment and Game Play.

Basic Skills Assessment

The skills assessment trials consist of four basic skill tests:

- Dribbling
- Tackling
- Passing & Control
- Shooting

Game Play Assessment

Involves players participating in small sided games and being assessed on the following criteria:

- Ability to read the play (game sense + positional play)
- Team play
- Control

Additionally players will be assessed on the following:

- Running with the ball
- Striking the ball (both feet)
- First touch (both feet)
- 1v1 (attack and defence)
- Coordination and speed
- Game “cleverness”
- Coach-‘ability’ and perseverance

The player assessment is carried out over two sessions, with players scoring points on a scale for each criteria. Points will be totalled to identify a players suitability to “A Team”.

Exceptions to the grading session assessment may occur when player's sign-on after the assessment sessions has been completed. These players may be invited to trial with a team depending on team numbers.



Appendix 1:

Letter to be given to parents/players involved in grading

Thank you for attending our grading session. Grading is being undertaken using the guidelines outlined in the club's grading policy which is available on the club web site.

Listed below are some of the conditions that you are expected to abide by should you/your child be selected to play in the highest division/s for their age group. Should you need any clarification of these conditions please ask prior to the grading session/s.

- Players and parents are to comply with the club's Code of Conduct which is available upon request.
- Players are required to attend grading session/s plus pre-season trials if required unless otherwise advised by the grading panel.
- Players who are unlikely to be selected will be advised by the grading panel as early as possible in the selection process and where possible prior to muster day.
- In circumstances where players are of similar ability, selection preference will be given to players who played with the club in the previous football season.
- Players and parents of players, will be informed by the grading panel at the end of the process whether or not they have been selected.
- Players are selected into a team, not a position. A player's position may be changed to suit the needs of the team.
- Training may be scheduled twice weekly. Players are expected to attend both sessions, wearing appropriate training gear. Boots and shin pads are compulsory. Junior players are to be accompanied by at least one parent/carer at training and at games.
- All players are expected to participate positively and enthusiastically at training and comply with the directions of the coach and/or manager.
- If a player continually disrupts a training session the player may be asked to leave that session. If such disruption recurs on a regular basis, the player may be dropped from the "A team".
- The coach is not to be questioned during the match. The coach may be approached privately after the game has finished.
- Players are obliged to notify the coach/manager as early as possible if they are unable to attend training or a game. It is the responsibility of the parents of junior players to comply with this requirement.
- Any disputes regarding either the grading process or unfair treatment of a player during the season should be referred to the committee through the club's Disputes process.

Please explain these conditions to your child should he/she be selected.

Any questions may be directed to the committee.

Yours faithfully

The committee NLFC