

Team Selection & Game Time Policy

U7s – U11s

In the primary school years, the game is focused on learning and practising football skills and techniques and playing for fun with a team on match day. The game is designed to facilitate more contact with the ball with smaller numbers playing on smaller pitches and with modified rules, such as the Power Play rule in Mini Soccer, to 'level up' a game when one team is of a higher ability than the other.

The clubs' philosophy is to take a holistic approach to player development that challenges players individually, helps them to develop socially as a member of their team, and provides a positive and enjoyable sporting experience.

We want to create an environment where players can explore their ideas and test their capabilities and to accomplish this we will strive to give players the freedom to experiment and play without fear of making mistakes.

Team selections will therefore prioritise individual development over results and focus on providing our players with learning opportunities. To this end and to avoid typecasting players in their early years, players may also be provided with opportunities to play in different positions to improve their understanding of the game.

We will aim, across a season, to provide comparable team selection and game time to all registered players and, in any given match, to provide at least 50% game time to all selected players, including substitutes.

Whilst we all like to win, it is understood and accepted that taking this holistic approach means that winning is of secondary importance to the development needs of the players in these early years.

U12s – U16s

In the secondary school years, players continue to develop their skills and techniques but teams are involved in a league structure with published results and league tables. Understandably, therefore, a more competitive approach to the game is more likely to be adopted.

For these age categories, the team manager is likely to establish with the players what their individual and collective objectives are, and this will naturally inform and guide their management of the team.

Whatever the team is trying to achieve, a fair and reasonable game time approach will be adopted and this will inevitably be influenced by a number of factors that are key to a happy and successful team, including, but not limited to, a player's:

- attendance at training
- availability to play matches
- physical fitness
- individual skills and ability
- general attitude and commitment

Decisions about game time will rest with the Team Manager and they alone (or in consultation with a coach or assistant) will select the team and determine the number and use of substitutes for each game. Where teams have a large squad the team manager will typically rotate players.

The use of substitutes in any game will, inevitably, be influenced by the prevailing match circumstances, any injuries sustained to other players during the game and their fitness on the day. Team managers will normally aim to provide game time to all substitutes.

In these age categories, the overarching objective is to provide all registered players with fair and reasonable game time over the course of a season whilst taking in to account all of the factors that can legitimately affect team selection.

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