



# Seaforth F.C. Player Grading and Team Allocation

## Overview

### Our aim

The key outcome of our club's grading system is to ensure that players will be placed into a team that will best enable them to develop their football skills. In the top two grades or divisions in each age group the sole criteria for forming teams will be the player ability. Teams in all other grades or divisions are also formed based on ability but where we can we will also keep some past team mates together.

### Which ages are graded?

At Seaforth FC, we have mandatory grading for boys/mixed competition players from ages U9 to U18 and for girls/womens competition players from ages WU10 to WU18. Girls WU9s are not graded. U6 to U8 players are not graded.

Grading from U10/WU10 and up is a requirement of the Manly Warringah Football Association (MWFA) which directs clubs to ensure that all players in those age groups are allocated into teams and divisions which reflect their playing ability and standard.

As part of our club's approach to the development of junior players we believe that it is in the best interest of players in the U9s boys/mixed competition that they are also graded. So at our club, grading is also mandatory for all U9 boys/mixed players.

### A quick overview of the player grading and team allocation process

All players attend grading trials which are generally held in mid February each year. After these trials players are ranked within their age group by assessors. The age coordinators then use these rankings to construct the teams. The final team lists are reviewed by the club's Coaching Director.

All proposed team divisions are then submitted to the MWFA who may adjust our submissions. Teams are then generally announced around the end of the first week of March.

### Responsibility

Seaforth FC has a Development Sub-Committee that oversees the operation of the annual player grading and team allocation process. The sub-committee includes the club's Coaching Director, Club President and several experienced coaches. The group sets the policies, procedures and guidelines that are adopted for all aspects of the grading.

### Questions or complaints about grading and team allocation

Please direct any questions about the grading and team allocation process as follows:

General questions about how the process works	Age coordinator
Players not being able to attending grading sessions	Age coordinator
Requests to be with friends (only for teams below top two grades/divisions)	Age coordinator
Registration of players	Club Registrar
Appeals about grading results	Coaching Director



## Information about the Trials

### Selection trials

Selection trials are generally held in mid February each year at Tania Park, Balgowlah Heights.

- Players must arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start time in order to register for the session.
- Players need to wear shin pads and boots and bring water and sunscreen.
- All sessions are deemed "on" regardless of the weather. Any cancellations will be made on the day and a re-scheduled date and time will be advised. Regularly check the club website for updates before the grading sessions.
- Due to insurance requirements players can only be assessed if they are registered.

### *For U9, U10, U11 and U12 players*

Each selection trial lasts for about an hour and consists of skill drills and a series of small-sided games. Every player will go through two mandatory grading sessions to ensure that everyone gets more opportunity to demonstrate their true talents. This also ensures that players get a second chance if they are unwell or have an "off" day at the first trial. We may also need to conduct an optional extra grading session to finalise the assessments.

### *For U13 to U18 players*

Each selection trial lasts for about an hour and a half and consists of a series of small-sided games. There is just one mandatory grading session. We may also need to conduct an optional extra grading session to finalise the assessments.

### *Player trial groups*

As players arrive at the selection trials we form them into small groups of players. For the initial grading session the approach to constructing the groups will vary depending upon the number of players in the session and the age group. It may be alphabetic, based on arrival order or based on the player's history with Seaforth FC (or another Club). For second or third grading sessions the player grouping is based on their performance at the previous grading sessions and possibly with reference to previous season's coaches assessments.

During the trials, players may be asked to sit out for part of the session. This is purely because the capability of those players is clear to the assessors and they would like to have fewer players on the pitch as that will enable them to focus on better understanding the skills of the remaining players. Being taken off during a trial in no way reflects on the ability or assessment of that player - often it is done with strong players so that others can be given the opportunity to shine.

### *New players*

For new players, if we're able to understand their ability beforehand we'll place them in an appropriately skilled group. Otherwise initially they're placed into a mid-range trial group.

### *Parents at trials*

No coaching is allowed during trials. Parents are asked to stand well away from the players and assessors. Please give us the opportunity to assess the players' natural abilities.



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*Trial groups are not a guarantee for team allocation*

Please note that trial groups are constructed to give players the best opportunities to demonstrate their talents. However, just because a player plays in a certain trial group that does not guarantee that they will be placed in a team with those players or into a certain team. The trials are just one part of a complex process to place players into teams.

## **Who are the assessors who do the grading?**

For U9 to U12 these are independent assessors engaged from outside of the club. They all have formal senior coaching qualifications and are experienced at grading large numbers of junior players. For U13 to U18 the assessors are experienced coaches from within our club or people known to the club who have the appropriate background and experience. The Coaching Director may assist with the assessment process as required.

## **Eligibility to trial**

Any player wishing to attend selection trials must be registered with Seaforth F.C. for the current season. Due to insurance purposes, there will be no exceptions made.

## **Players unable to make one or more grading sessions**

The best way for a player to obtain the grading result they want is to attend and try their best at all scheduled grading sessions. Their performance at the trials is the key information used to determine which team they are placed into. If a player doesn't make it to all sessions then we need to use less current information such as their coach's assessment from the previous year (if it was done) and their playing history (if it's available). This information can be less clear and mean allocations into teams might not do the player justice. We strongly recommend that players attend all scheduled grading sessions.

If a player can't attend please tell your Age Coordinator as soon as possible to see if we can find another option in a similar age group for the player to attend a grading session.

## **Allocation into Teams**

### **How players are placed into teams**

Once the player rankings are finalised by the assessors and final registered player numbers are confirmed the Age Coordinator will:

- Review the rankings to identify any situations where we may need to refer to Coach's assessments from the previous year or other playing history
- Construct an initial set of team lists based solely on the player rankings
- For U9, U10 and U11 teams we will try and honour requests to play with friends but only if the friends are graded in the same ability level (see the next section on grading teams into divisions)
- For Division 1 and 2 teams in the U12 to U18 age groups .. we have a duty to the MWFA, other clubs and our own players to position our players and teams according to their ability in order to make all divisions competitive. So, for these teams we don't process requests to play with friends.



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- For Division 3 and below teams in the U12 to U18 age groups .. we do wish to help wherever possible so for example, if friends are in say an U12 Division 4 and an U12 Division 5 team, it can sometimes be possible for players in those teams to be placed together in one team or the other.
- Put forward a proposed grading level or division for the teams (see the next section on grading teams into divisions)
- Pass the team lists and team grading levels to the club Coaching Director for review

Once the club has reviewed the team lists and proposed team grades they are then submitted to the MWFA. We generally obtain approval from them by the end of the first week of March.

The final decision with respect to the division of a team e.g. Division 1, 2 or 3 etc. is made by the MWFA Grading Committee. Additional details of the MWFA Grading are available in the *MWFA Competition Guidelines* document.

### **Grading teams into divisions**

As well as the players being graded and ranked, the club also must rank the teams so that they can be placed by the MWFA into groups of similar strength teams from other clubs. The club prepares a proposed team grading and this is then reviewed and approved (or changed) by the MWFA.

For U9, U10 and U11 teams the MWFA has a simple system with three grades of ability - top 25%, next 25% and all others. We simply place teams into the grade that aligns with our player rankings. Occasionally, if we feel that a team isn't strong enough we will drop them down to a more suitable level.

For U12 to U18 teams, once teams are formed the club also assesses the strength of each team as a whole to establish our recommended divisions. We consider the team's average player strength and experience, team size, last year's team performance and developmental impact of playing in a division or grade that may be too hard or too easy for them.

All decisions regarding team grading are the responsibility of the Coaching Director in consultation with the relevant Age Group Coordinators and team coaches involved.

### **Age groups and requests to play in older teams**

The age group that a player is usually expected to play in is determined by the age that they will attain during the year. For example if they turn 10 years old during the calendar year then they would be expected to play in U10s. All players should normally play in their correct age group and are not permitted to play in a lower age group. For example a player turning 11 years old during the year must play in the U11's, and cannot play in an U10 team.

Players are allowed to play up in a higher age group, but not if this would displace another registered player from his or her correct age group or team. In these situations the younger player would need to move back down to their correct age group. Whenever a player plays in an older age group, the club, the coach and the parents must assess:

- the risk of injury by older players who may be bigger and more aggressive in tackles
- what impact there may be on the development of the younger player amongst older players

Approval to play in an age group which is more than two years above the player's age requires written approval from the club and from the MWFA.



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### **Team numbers**

#### *Maximum players per team*

For U9 teams there are 7 players on the field, so ideal team numbers are 10 to 11, with a maximum of 12.

For U10 and U11 teams there are 9 players on the field, so ideal team numbers are 11 to 12, with a maximum of 13.

For U12 and older teams there are 11 players on the field, so ideal team numbers are 14 to 15. A maximum of 16 players can be included onto the Referees game card, so this would generally be the maximum number per team.

We monitor registration numbers for each age group and try very hard to "close" registrations for an age group once ideal team numbers have been reached. However, sometimes the number of players in an age group requires us to construct teams with team sizes that are larger than we would ideally like to have.

For example, with an U15 age group of 34 players, do we have 2 teams, each with 17 players or do we have 3 teams where 2 teams have 11 players and one team has 12 players?

In these situations past experience has shown us that it is best to have a smaller number of teams, each with more players than usual rather than having an extra team in the group but then each team having fewer players than usual. Having a team with large numbers is not ideal but it is quite manageable and better than turning away players from the game. The alternative is that a team with fewer players will constantly struggle to get a full team for matches and results and morale will suffer.

#### *Minimum players per team*

For U9 teams the minimum number of players we will place in a team is 9.

For U10 and U11 teams the minimum number of players we will place in a team is 10.

For U12 and older teams the minimum number of players we will place in a team is usually 13. In some cases reduced player numbers for an age group require a team size of 12 but we do try very hard to avoid this.

### **Players who register after we have "closed" registrations for an age group**

As stated above, we monitor registration numbers for each age group and try very hard to "close" registrations for an age group once ideal team numbers have been reached. Players who still wish to play for the club after their age group has been closed will be referred to a higher age group (where applicable) or placed on a waiting list until the club can guarantee that another full quota for a new team has been achieved.

The Coaching Director in consultation with the relevant Age Coordinators decides whether or not to accept late registrations and if so, where to place the player. These situations are difficult to manage and we do try and find a reasonable solution to the problem. However, any player who registers late must accept that they may not end up in a team that would normally be the most appropriate for them or unfortunately that they may not get a place at all.



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### **Requests to change teams after the teams have been announced**

After the teams have been selected and released any subsequent requests from players (or parents) to move from their selected team need to be carefully considered to avoid any further 'knock on' effects with other teams.

The overriding principle is to view any request for an individual move within the broader context of the overall age group, including team numbers, eg. if the movement of one player will leave the original team short, and the new team with extra players.

Each request will absolutely also be considered on its individual circumstances, including the developmental impact of the individual player involved. Again, these situations are difficult to manage and we do try and find a reasonable solution to the problem. However, players must accept that if a move would cause too many other problems then they may not be moved.

All decisions regarding player movement are the responsibility of the Coaching Director in consultation with the relevant Age Group Coordinator and the team coaches involved.

### **Understanding the impact of leaving (deregistration) after grading**

Players and their parents should understand that when you register we are assuming that you will stay with the club even if you are placed into a team that perhaps might not be the one you thought you would be allocated to.

If however after the teams have been allocated you decide to deregister and leave, please understand that this can possibly have a major impact on your allocated team and on other teams in the age group - so much so that a team can be in danger of folding due to inadequate player numbers, which means other players can be greatly affected.

So, we do ask that when you register, please consider carefully whether or not we're the right club for you so that both you and we are guaranteed of a firm commitment. If having been graded you're thinking of leaving, please consider carefully the possible impacts that decision might have on others. Finally, also, if a player cancels their registration with the club and pursues other alternatives such as another club or sport, then only a partial refund is provided, not a full refund. If the club cannot place a player into a team then the club will refund the registration fee in full.