



# Seaforth F.C. Player Grading and Team Allocation

## Overview

### Our aim

As a club, we have two primary development objectives, namely:

1. To enable the development of the junior and youth players to their best ability, in a manner which sees them develop as individuals and as a team: and
2. To provide an opportunity for all players to make their own, informed decision on the football development options available for them at the club.

We achieve this by performing a grading and then a team allocation process. Following grading, we offer approximately 30% of the higher performing players an opportunity to play in a stronger division team(s). This provides an opportunity for the stronger players to play with similar calibre players, which helps them develop quicker and enjoy the game more. However, individual players from these teams who wish to progress into more competitive teams are given opportunities to move up out of social teams if they perform well in grading.

Through this process, Seaforth FC provides each individual with an opportunity to decide how they wish to progress in football. It is after all, important that each player makes an informed decision knowing all their options.

Teams in all other grades or divisions are also formed broadly based on ability but whilst they're still playing the MiniRoos format (U9-U11) where teams are less competitive and more social we do try and keep them together.

### Which ages are graded?

At Seaforth FC, we have mandatory grading for all players from ages U10 to U18. Girls WU9s are not graded. U6 to U8 players are not graded.

For Mixed/Boys U9 players who are interested in playing at a more competitive level we offer optional grading and we strongly recommend that those players do come along to this.

Grading of players from U10/WU10 and up is a requirement of the Manly Warringah Football Association (MWFA).

### 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



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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. Don't bring a ball.
- 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.

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

There is no grading for girls Under 9 (W9) players. Grading for Mixed/Boys Under (U9) players is optional. For Mixed/Boys U9 players who are interested in playing at a more competitive level we strongly recommend that they come along to grading. If you don't think grading is for your child that's fine too - we'll work hard to try to ensure that we keep the teams at a social level and with past team mates.

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



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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 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.

### *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 generally 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. Often the prospective team coaches are involved. There are always assessors who are independent of the teams. The Coaching Director may assist with the assessment process as required.

### **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.



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## 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.
- Refer to Coach's assessments from the previous year or other playing history.
- Construct an initial set of team lists and if possible, discuss them with prospective and past coaches for their opinion.
- Put forward a proposed grading level or division for the teams - this will be submitted to the MWFA (see the next section on grading teams into divisions).
- Pass the team lists and team grading levels to the club Coaching Director for review.
- Pass team lists to team managers.
- For the more competitive 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 the more social U9, U10 and U11 teams we will try and keep continuity of teams however please understand that some changes inevitably happen because team sizes change at U10 and again at U12.
- 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.
- For Division 3 and below teams in the U12 to U18 age groups .. we do wish to keep team mates together wherever possible however there are always players seeking to play at a higher level and we need to provide the spaces in teams above for that to happen.

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 team rankings.

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



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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.

## **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.



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### *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.

### **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**

After the teams have been allocated and published, if you decide to deregister and leave, this may have a major impact on your team and on other teams in the age group.

This can result in a team being in danger of folding due to inadequate player numbers, other players can be greatly affected and a lot of effort may be required to re-adjust the affected teams.

If a player cancels their registration after teams have been announced then a large portion of the total registration fee, required to cover the cost of effort to re-adjust teams, will not be refunded.



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