



Spartak 78 Football Club



CHARTER STANDARD
COMMUNITY CLUB

Charter Standard Community Club of Saffron Walden, Essex.

PLAYER MATCHING SELECTION PRINCIPLES & POLICY

Spartak 78 aspires to generate an atmosphere and environment where young football players can develop their skills and enjoy the game in a friendly encouraging 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:

- **The Club 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. Squads are matched on development level (current ability), motivation, attitude and approach.
- Player movement between squads shall be an expectation within the club so that each and every child gains the most benefit and has the most fun that the club can provide its players.

New children joining

- **All children regardless of ability will be able to join the club.**
- 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 will 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 start of the next season, or 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 able to do so. This would only happen following consultation with their parents and with the agreement of the Committee.

Recommended squad size (RSS)

- Squad sizes shall be determined by the number of players available to each age-group
- 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 11 players.
 - For U9 & U10 (or for 7 v 7 games), the minimum RSS is 8 and a maximum RSS of 15.
 - For U11 & U12 (or for 9 v 9 games), the minimum RSS is 10 and a maximum RSS of 18.
 - For U13 & U14 & older, the minimum RSS is 13 and the maximum RSS of 18.
- Variation from the RSS's given shall only be adopted with agreement from all the coaches of the age-group and the Club 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 Spartak 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.
- 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.
- U7 children may play in an U8s team, where they are considered able to deal with the demands by both coach and parents. On most occasions the intention will be that, such players will revert to playing in their own age group for the following season.
- In age-groups above and including U8s, children shall only be allowed to play-up where:
 - they are 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);
 - the player is also be considered to be a key performer within that older group.

Note: regardless of the above agreement for a player to 'play up' may be provided in exceptional circumstances by the Club Committee following discussion.

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 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 potentially new squad.
- 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.
- All invitations to change squads after the initial selection process has been announced shall be made via the Club 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 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 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 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 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. Even where considered necessary the game(s) shall not be conducted or communicated in a such way so as to indicate that selection is the outcome.
- **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 U7 and U8 squads, 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 should 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.
- 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.
 - 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.
- For all age groups there may be occasions when EPT is inappropriate or simply cannot be achieved due unplanned event.
 - At such times coaches should abide with the spirit of this philosophy as best possible.
- For each 11-a-side match, it is normally recommended that the coach should select no more than 14 players to attend a game. This may 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 Committee.