

SWCFC Briefing – Plans for U13 & U15 for 2017-18, including Eastern Junior Alliance Football

This briefing note is to inform players and parents about the plans for Under 13 & Under 15 football at SWCFC in 2017-18. This includes the specific question of entering a team into the Eastern Junior Alliance (EJA) at these age groups next season. There will be open meeting for all interested parties in regard to EJA for both Under 13 and Under 15 for 2017-18 (i.e. current U12 and U14) at Caton's Lane clubhouse on Wednesday 3rd May, at 7.30pm.

Q. What are the plans for Under 13 football for SWCFC for season 2017-18?

A. Currently there are two teams at u12 in SWTFC Youth and three teams at Spartak Saffron Walden. Next season we hope to enter at least three u13 Cambs. league teams, plus a new team entered into Eastern Junior Alliance (EJA) football. Exact numbers will depend on demand (i.e. players) and resources (e.g. pitches and coaches).

Q. What are the plans for Under 15 football for SWCFC for season 2017-18?

A. Currently there is one team at u14 in SWTFC Youth and two teams at Spartak Saffron Walden. Next season we hope to enter at least two Cambs. league teams, plus a new team entered into Eastern Junior Alliance (EJA) football. Exact numbers will depend on demand (i.e. players) and resources (e.g. pitches and coaches).

Q. How will next season's teams be organised?

A. We envisage building on this season's arrangements. The Interim Board of SWCFC is encouraging all coaches at a given age group to work together to plan arrangements for the season ahead.

Q. What is Eastern Junior Alliance (EJA) Football?

A. EJA¹ is the stepping stone between the academy levels of the professional ranks and the regular youth level in all counties. It is only open to clubs which are affiliated to a senior club, playing at 'Step 5' or above in the English League 'pyramid' system². It is a very challenging, highly competitive level of football, and requires a greater level of commitment (and cost) than regular youth football.

Q. Why is SWCFC intending to enter an Under 13 and an Under 15 team in EJA in 2017-18?

A. Saffron Walden Town FC Youth have been examining the scope to enter EJA teams since the senior club was promoted to Step 5 in April 2015 (thus opening the opportunity to EJA). That process has progressed alongside the process of creating SWCFC, and further discussions in the last month with the EJA themselves has suggested entering both u13 and u15 teams in 2017-18 is viable.

¹ See: <http://easternjunioralliance.com/> for more details.

² Saffron Walden Town FC play at 'Step 5' (i.e. the fifth tier of non-league football) in the Eastern Counties League, Premier Division.

Q. Will the u13 and u15 teams in 2017-18 essentially be made up by merging the highest level players between the existing SWTFC Youth and Spartak teams?

A. No. The standard of EJA football is significantly higher than that of the current teams at the club (even the highest level ones). SWCFC would like to give existing club players the opportunity to put themselves forward for EJA trials but our expectation is that it will only be appropriate for a relatively limited number of current players to make the step up to EJA. Entering players who were not likely to be of a sufficient standard would be not appropriate for the development or enjoyment of those players.

Q. Should SWCFC not simply give existing players the opportunity to play EJA?

A. Existing players will have the opportunity to trial for the EJA team, but ultimately it is an elite league and players will be picked on merit. Any other approach would not be appropriate either for either the players or the club. It is likely that players not currently at the club may well come through the trials into the squad.

It is important to note that this includes players from Saffron Walden and the surrounding area who currently have to go outside the town (often many miles away) to play at EJA level, as hitherto, the town itself has not been able to offer EJA football. Being able to offer EJA will therefore allow local players – some of whom may have played for Spartak and SWTFC Youth in the past – to play for their local club again.

Q. How will the EJA player squad be selected?

A. SWCFC will run a day of trials on Sunday 14th May to select players for the u13 and u15 EJA squad for next season. These trials will be open to both current SWTFC Youth and Spartak players, and non-club players alike. Selection for the EJA squads will be led by Shane Mills (U15) and Brian Peggs (U13), along with the SWTFC u18s manager Mike Riccio, the Reserves manager Keith Dicker, and the 1st team manager Stuart Wardley. Each selector will score the players using objective criteria.

Q. When will the EJA trials be?

A. The trials will take place on Sunday 14th May, at Herberts Farm. The U13 trials will be from 10.00-12.00, and the U15 trials from 1.00pm-3.00pm. There is no need to pre-register. Players can simply attend on the day.

Q. Will EJA cost more to play in?

A. Yes. EJA football has a series of requirements which go beyond regular youth football. Whereas the Board of SWCFC want to maintain annual fees for non-EJA teams to no more than c. £150 a year, EJA players are likely to have to pay around £100-£150 a year more. The exact figure will depend on a range of factors including sponsorship etc. The additional cost will cover items such as: Kit (Club tracksuit + away kit); referee match fees; the cost of

provision of (mandatory) food after matches; club/team registration and player registration; higher fine levels; additional equipment costs.

Q. Who will manage the u13 and u15 EJA team?

A. The Board of SWCFC has asked Brian Peggs to lead the u13 team and Shane Mills to lead the u15 EJA team. Both are FA Level 2 qualified coaches, with a background in professional football. Both also have some knowledge of the EJA.

Q. Does entering a team in EJA mean that SWCFC is an elitist club?

A. No – not at all. SWCFC is committed to providing ‘football for all’, and the scale of the new club means we are far better able to seek to do that. Ultimately though of course we are totally dependent on volunteers to take teams forward. Having EJA means we are also potentially able to attract and retain the highest quality young players, and support their development as well.

Q. Won't you be taking out the best players from the existing teams and this will hinder the development and enjoyment of players not making the cut for EJA?

A. No player will be taken out of any team. EJA trials will be an opportunity for anyone who is interested in it. This will come down to the personal choice of players and their parents. If players want to stick with existing teams they are welcome to do so. It is worth noting also that without having a EJA team, there is a risk that the most ambitious, highly competitive players will find another local EJA team anyway if SWCFC doesn't form one. In the past local players have moved to teams outside the town if they cannot find the right standard within their local club.

Q. Will EJA players be able to dual register with non-EJA teams?

A. It is unlikely this will happen with the commitment required for EJA football but this will be a choice for individual players and their parent.

Q. How do I get further information?

A. There will be an open evening for all parties interested in EJA for next season on Wednesday 3rd May, at 7.45pm at Catons Lane clubhouse. In the meantime, if you have questions please contact your coaches or Martin Johnson or Matt Clare (SWCFC Co-Chairs) on mpjohnson73@hotmail.co.uk and matt.clare@tridentbc.com

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