NEW LAMBTON FOOTBALL CLUB INCORPORATED

NEW LAMBTON FC JUNIORS

REFEREE DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2023

Introduction

The Vision for New Lambton FC Juniors is for us to be the leading and most respected local community football club and to support and promote football to ensure it is the largest and most popular sport for males and females.

Our Participating Goals are:

1. Lead and facilitate high quality participation experiences for all participants through the provision of guidance and relevant resources for coaches, **match officials** and volunteers.

Our Participating Strategic Priorities are:

1. Women and girls
2. Establish Female Referee Mentoring program at Club level
3. Provide more opportunities for referees to advance to the next level of accreditation

Football Australia believes that referee development should be:

Flexible – offering a range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of referees

Accessible – support is available at a time, place and cost to meet specific needs of the referee

Inclusive – referee development is for EVERYONE

Recognised – referees that demonstrate positive behaviour should be recognised and valued

Best practice suggests that “on the job” training provides optimum results and therefore delivery of referee education and support of referees within the club environment would provide the best opportunities for referees and positive experiences for young players.

With a large number of referees involved in football being volunteers, there is a limited ratio of accredited referees to players nationally. This poses a challenge that needs to be tackled with a new approach that may already be in place to a certain degree in some clubs. Best practice and recent research conducted by the ASC suggest that “on the job” training and support is not only what club referees generally prefer but also gives the best results in referee development. Support of referee development and of referees within the club environment will provide the best opportunities for referees and positive experiences for young players.

Who Are Our Referees?

A not-insignificant number of referees at our Club are volunteer referees.

Volunteer coaches are mostly juniors players and / or parents / caregivers who referee because their children are involved. Their primary motivation is seeing their child having fun and achieving something.

They see refereeing as a good way to spend time with their children and feel that their involvement sets a good example.

Many may be “new” referees: they may never have refereed or played football before; some may have been refereeing for a while.

Whether they are new or have some experience, they are all developing and can be susceptible to criticism – they are just volunteers trying to help.

They are happy to help when asked, but they aren’t beating down the door. They are satisfied as long as they feel useful and valued.

They don’t want to be overburdened, so we need to be conscious to not pile extra tasks on them.

Referee Recruitment

Anyone aged 13 and over can become a referee.

There are so many different reasons to become a referee. It’s a great way to:

- earn some extra money
- give back to the game you love
- stay fit and active
- build leadership skills like effective communication, working as a team and decision-making.

Whether you’re a player, past player, parent, club volunteer or new to our game, we’ll equip you with all of the knowledge and support you need to enter the rewarding world of refereeing. Who knows, you might even officiate in the A-League or internationally with FIFA!

To become a referee, you must be 13 years of age or over and you will need to complete the Football Australia Online Laws of the Game Course as well as completing a Level 4 Referee Course.

We rely heavily on the parents / caregivers of our players to volunteer to be referees.

There are a number of steps that we take for recruitment:

- Announce the refereeing openings on our Club website, TeamApp and other social media channels.
- Message our existing referees letting them know we're recruiting. They may have friends or previous colleagues who would be perfect for the job!
- Communicate with our network. We get in touch with our Club members, their parents and our current sports teams and spread the word.

Diversity and inclusion is something incredibly important to consider when doing any "recruiting" for our Club - not least for a refereeing position. We always ensure that our Club provides equal opportunities and we are conscious to be mindful of unconscious bias - this is incredibly important. Our referees will ALWAYS be "recruited" based on their suitability for the job, and factors like race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity will NEVER come into play.

How Do We Train and Support Our Referees?

We have an action plan (this document) in place to recruit, train and support referees.

To ensure that all of our referees have a minimum standard of knowledge and are competent and confident, the Club ensures that all our referees complete the Laws of The Game online course.

All referees must be registered with Play Football.

We provide resources and support, all available on or via the NLFCJ website.

We shall also:

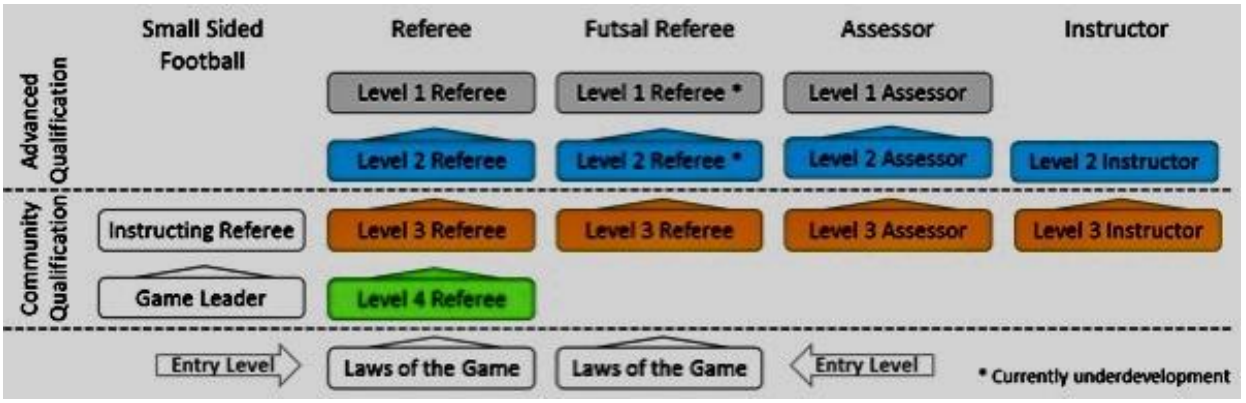
- Initiate induction programmes for new referees.
- Monitor and mentor Club referees and provide support based on their needs / wants.
- Assist referees to develop and review their practice and reflect on their behaviours.
- Ensure the referees have access to appropriate learning opportunities and resources including websites, courses, and workshops.
- Value the contribution of the referees by welcoming them at their commencement and thanking them at the conclusion of the season.
- Create a positive, safe and non-threatening environment in which referees feel that they can make mistakes and learn.

What Are Our Expectations?

Our referees should:

- be a good fit for the club and should both believe in and embody your club values and principles
- should be on time and should set a good example for players
- officiate in an unbiased and fair manner
- get players responding positively
- be able to handle any challenging behaviour or personal circumstances within the team

What Training Is Available?



Match officials in Australia are subject to two streams within the accreditation structure - Community and Advanced.

Each structure consists of multiple accreditation levels allowing for a smooth advancement and continual progression to a higher level if desired.

Community level courses, targeted at officials working within local / regional amateur football competitions, consists of the Laws of the Game, Level 4 and Level 3 accreditations across various fields such as Outdoor, Futsal, Instructor and Assessor.

STEP 1: The Football Australia Online Laws of the Game Course provides a basic introduction to the Laws of the Game and their interpretation. To successfully complete the course, a participant needs to pass the online examination and print their Statement of Completion Certificate.

STEP 2: The Level 4 Referee Course provides participants with education and training to become a referee. It can be undertaken in a classroom environment as a one-day course consisting of theory modules and practical sessions on a pitch to enable referees to begin officiating

Advanced level courses, directed towards officials working within regional, state and national competitions, consists of both Level 2 and Level 1 Accreditations for relevant Outdoor and assessor officials in addition to Level 2 accreditations for instructors.

Key Topics For Successful Referees

Communication

Learning how to communicate is an important attribute for all referees. Appropriate communication helps to deliver high quality officiating as well as prevent and manage issues such as conflict and abuse. As such, it is important to acknowledge the main forms of communication available for referees and how they can assist them to deliver good officiating. The Australian Sports Commission has compiled a comprehensive resource for all sport officials, with key concepts highlighted below.

Forms of communication:

Voice:

- Introductions to participants, coaches and others prior to the competition
- Explaining a breach of the rules / laws to participants during the competition
- Relating an account of an incident to a judiciary / tribunal after a competition

Whistle:

- To award a free kick or penalty
- To end a period of play

Indications/signals:

- A flag / indication is used for fouls/law infringements, substitutions and when the ball goes out of the field of play.

Body language:

- Eye contact
- Stance
- Hands

Communication Tips:

- As a general rule, communication will be most effective for everyone when the official uses more than one method of communication to convey a message eg. verbal and a visual signal (flag)
- A confident and decisive verbal communication style assists officials in managing all parties, characterised by a clear voice, appropriately chosen words and a firm manner
- Confident and decisive body language. This shows a person in control of themselves and the competition
- Court presence is an effective selling tool for officials. Officials should look good and come across as someone with authority and in control of the situation.

- Good body language involving eye contact, a comfortable stance, hands behind the back, a nod of acceptance all give the impression of being approachable, and always looking to be in control.
- Varying the whistles tone, volume and length of sound is an often underutilised but effective conflict management tool.

Health and Fitness

Keeping up with the play is important for both assistant referees and referees in order to ensure they're taking up an appropriate position to make the correct decision. This means that refereeing football requires a degree of mostly aerobic fitness in order to adequately officiate. This aim to keep up with play predominantly involves jogging, running, or sprinting as referees must remain at a suitable distance to the ball as it travels around the field. Additionally to keeping up with play, football-specific fitness is crucial as decision-making has been shown to be impaired when people are fatigued. As such, it is beneficial for officials to have knowledge of appropriate health and fitness requirements of officiating, with important topics outlined below.

Warming Up:

An easy way to minimise the likelihood of injury whilst refereeing is by undertaking a thorough and appropriate warm up. The benefits of warming up include:

- Increased speed of contraction and relaxation of warmed muscles
- Reduce muscle stiffness
- Increased blood flow through active muscle tissues
- Allows the heart rate to get to a workable rate for beginning exercise

An appropriate warm up for referees will focus on warming up the leg muscles. A general structure as recommended by the Australian Sport Commission involves jogging, dynamic stretching and a specific warm up. This should take place over approximately 15-20 minutes. Jogging should begin at a slow speed, serving just to raise the heart rate and blood flow around the body. The dynamic stretching should replicate the types of movement performed whilst officiating; creating a stretch on the move that reduces muscle stiffness. For a referee, the final few specific drills should involve some short acceleration from standing and jogging starts to near maximal speed to reflect the sprints they will have to take during a game. However, there is no need to overload the intensity or length of the warm-up and officials should feel warm, with a light sweat, and ready to go.

Fitness Program

Whilst most amateur officials do not require exorbitant fitness levels to participate in refereeing, it is a good idea to perform some fitness training outside of actual matches. This could involve sessions focusing on particular components of fitness such as aerobic endurance, agility or speed. All of these foundations are required to referee a game of football and therefore it would be beneficial for some out of competition development of these areas. This could include going for a run to improve aerobic endurance, or completing interval shuttle runs to develop speed and agility. This could be completed multiple times per week if aiming to maximise fitness improvements, however this may not be necessary for all levels of officiating. Many refereeing groups have organised training sessions for their referees on a regular basis throughout the season.

Nutrition

The nature of football refereeing requires physical activity that must be fuelled by energy from consuming food and drink. As with participating athletes, referees should ensure energy levels are adequate prior to matches, as well as ensuring adequate nutrients are received. The Australian Sports Commission recommends a light, high carbohydrate meal at least two hours before a match to make sure you are well fuelled to officiate as well as sufficient water hydration. During the match, fluid and hydration is most important to prevent dehydration associated with sweating and poor fluid intake. After the match referees should again aim to replenish carbohydrate levels with a carbohydrate rich meal including foods such as sandwiches, fruit, soup, cereal bars, yoghurt and carbohydrate drinks.

On non-match days, it is important to maintain nutritional standards to maximise health and any training undertaken. Particular focus should be placed on carbohydrate, protein and other nutrient rich foods to boost energy levels (carbohydrate), allow fitness to improve (protein) and keep the body functioning well (nutrients). Below lists some of the typical foods that are high in the stated mineral to give you an idea of appropriate meals.

- Carbohydrates: breads, cereals, pasta, rice, potato and fruit
- Protein: fish, low-fat dairy products, chicken, eggs, legumes and meat
- Iron: red meats, wholegrain cereals, eggs, and leafy green vegetables.
- Calcium: low-fat dairy products
- Fibre: wholegrain breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables.

Mental Strength

Many mental attributes are required by referees in order to maximise correct decision making as well as minimising conflict. Skills such as staying focused, determined, as well as remaining controlled whilst under pressure are all beneficial for football officials, and can be improved.

Goal setting will ensure internal motivation is high for match officials, therefore leading to greater determination. Examples of such goals may include eliminating incorrect decision making or becoming accredited at a higher referee level. Additional factors to improve determination are personal belief, physical and mental rest and keeping perspective.

To improve focus, officials can undertake a range of exercises. Simulation training (including imagery), positive/effective self-talk, performance routines and concentration exercises can all be utilised by referees in preparation for performance. Consistent practice will help referees remain focused during matches and therefore be beneficial for overall performance.

Pressure situations within matches challenge referees to perform at their highest. Maximising decision making in all areas is important however particular stress is placed on crucial decisions such as awarding goals or penalty kicks. To improve the control of referees, practicing to maintain a focus on the present and disregarding past errors will aid referees in their ability to achieve this. Again, concentration exercises will help to eliminate the influence of internal and external distractors during times of pressure from players, coaches and internal sources.

Conflict

Preventing and dealing with conflict

Conflicts for all sports officials is usually a difference of opinions between the officials, the coach, the player, the spectators and even the administrators. There are occasions when conflict in the sporting environment is inevitable, however developing strategies to minimise conflict from arising is vital. The following tips recommended by the Australian Sport Commission may assist officials'.

Preventing Conflict:

- Prevention is always better than cure! If action is taken early in the game, conflict is less likely to occur
- Make competitors aware of your presence by reacting immediately to rule infringements (when appropriate)
- Be definite and firm with decisions and communication
- Look sharp and act sharp - this will gain respect as an official
- Don't take criticisms personally. Remember that coaches and participants are seeing the game from a different perspective to the officials
- Speak clearly and firmly in heated situations. This will indicate confidence in managing the situation
- Keep calm

Resolving Conflict:

- Be professional: Speak clearly and stay composed in heated situations. This demonstrates confidence in managing the situation.
- Remain calm: Don't over-react. Stay relaxed and adopt a low-key posture/body language.
- Address the problem - not the emotions: Try to put aside the emotions of all parties.
- Focus on the person: Acknowledge a participant with eye contact and use their name if possible.
- Be fair: Avoid team or individual bias at all costs. Demonstrating integrity is one of the greatest assets of an official.
- Be confident and open: Don't be defensive or try to justify actions. Clarify decisions when appropriate, based on the facts and the evidence presented.
- Be firm: Deal with unacceptable behaviour firmly and quickly. Set boundaries in a polite, professional and assertive manner.