



## **Harpenden Colts Squad Management Policy**

*Approved January 2023. Amended January 2024*

Each Harpenden Colts year group operates within the constitution of the Harpenden Colts Football Club (“Harpenden Colts” or the “Club”). This document has been adopted by the Football Management Committee (“FMC”). The FMC of the Club will be the final arbiter of any disputes relating to this document and any decisions relating to it will be guided by the Club Philosophy.

This Policy has been adopted to establish the approach to the management of each squad within Harpenden Colts.

### **1. General Principles of Squad Management**

All Harpenden Colts squads are run in accordance with the following principles:-

- The development, wellbeing and safety of all players is paramount and should be taken into account when making all decisions
- The coaches’ decisions should always be fair and reasonable to all players in the squad, with no preferences being given to any particular children, including children of the coaches. Coaches’ children should not be disadvantaged either e.g., held back due to a lack of coaches or squad leads.
- Players should be encouraged to play regularly in all or a variety of positions (see section 4 below)
- Across the season, all players should be given equal playing time subject to their availability and the criteria included elsewhere in the policy
- It is expected that all players are available for at least 75% of the team matches. In the event that players are available for less they can remain in the squad but it’s likely that the squad size will need to be increased which may impact playing time. It is unfair for players to be available for a small percentage of matches and expect to play in all/the majority of the matches they are available for.
- It is expected that all players attend at least 75% of training sessions
- Where players are attending less than 75% of training sessions and/or are available for less than 75% of matches this should be discussed by the Year Group Lead or Squad Lead with the parents/carers of the player. In early years players should be encouraged to try as many



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sports as possible and this could lead to low availability, but as players get older there is an expectation that they commit to their team. It may be possible to manage availability for matches by including players with similar availability in the same squad. Where a player is injured and unavailable due to injury the expectation does not apply.

- All players selected for a match should play at least 50% of the match
- We want everyone within the Harpenden Colts family (players, parents/carers and coaches) to enjoy winning but not at the expense of the principles set out above
- Communication with players and parents/carers should be polite, respectful and age appropriate



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### **2. Training**

The Club requires that at least two coaches, each of whom have up to date FA DBS certificates and FA emergency aid certificates, to be present at every training session. Where multiple training sessions are occurring at the same time at the same location (e.g. 4 squads training at the Roundwood 4G or a full year Group training together) it is acceptable for there to only be 1 coach provided the other coaches are aware and are available to support if needed.

The Year Group Lead/Squad Lead should use the club's curriculum and set sessions for training, if this is not available for a year group they should seek to create and deliver training sessions that are fun, developmental and that meet the needs of the individuals involved.

Training sessions should focus on the "4 Corners Model" which is used by the F.A. as a structure for player development, or such other model as the Club may adopt from time to time. The four corners model refers to four categories, or areas of possible development, which are applicable to junior players, namely

- Physical - elements such as speed and stamina etc.
- Technical - elements such as ball control, passing, shooting etc.
- Psychological - elements such as decision-making, risk-taking etc.
- Social - elements such as team-working, communication skills etc.

The 4 Corners Model is taught on FA training courses for junior coaches in which all Squad Leads and coaches are encouraged to participate.

It is at the discretion of the Squad Lead (and prior to formation of squads the Year Group Lead) whether to offer training sessions during school holidays but any such training will be self-funded by the squad (the Club does not fund the hire of venues for holiday training) and no player should be pressured to attend or contribute to the cost of holiday sessions or prejudiced by their failure to attend such sessions.

Joint training sessions between squads are strongly encouraged by the Club. However, other than as part of a player evaluation with a view to squad movement, which has been agreed in advance with the other relevant Squad Lead:-

- A Squad Lead/coach should not invite one or more players from other squads to join their training sessions without seeking the prior approval of the squad or Year Group Lead; and
- If a joint training session is planned with members of another squad it should be offered to all



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members of the other squad, and not just some of them.

### **3. *League Participation***

Not all Harpenden Colts squads participate in league football. For those that do, there are additional responsibilities involved with running a squad in a league which can be summarised as follows:-

- Ensuring the timely registration of players (if required by the league)
- Maintaining a list of availability for matches via the Colts website or other means (such FA Matchday app or a Doodle poll etc)
- Monitoring upcoming fixtures and making arrangements for matches with opposition coaches
- Making arrangements for home matches, booking referees and pitches, appointing match delegates and linesmen and arranging for goals to be erected and taken down
- Communicating with parents/carers in a timely manner about selection and arrangements for matches

The above administrative tasks can, and often are, delegated to an administrator or one of the coaches. This frees up the Squad Lead to plan training sessions and to manage the team on match days.

### **4. *Match Management***

The Club expects that at least two coaches, each of whom have up to date FA DBS certificates and FA emergency aid certificates, to be present at every match. Ideally at least one of the coaches should have their FA Level 1. In rare cases it is acceptable to have only one Coach present.

The Club's recommendations for matches, which are in line with the FA's core philosophy, are as follows:-

- Equal play time (see below)
- Positional rotation of players
- No bias



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### *Equal Play Time*

Equal playing time should not be considered a right, but a privilege that the players earn through demonstrating the right behaviours during training and matches.

Equal play time applies over the season, not one match. This means that less strong players in a squad should be given extended time in less competitive games. However every player who is asked to attend a match should be allowed to play at least 50% of the match.

Equal play time may require a coach to make changes when they might not be inclined to do so. Therefore substitutions should be thought out before the game starts.

There may be occasions when equal play time is inappropriate, for example if a coach has fitness concerns about a player. Likewise failure to attend training (subject to the comments in Section 8 below), poor behaviour, lack of effort, concentration or engagement or limited availability may result in selection for fewer matches but any such de-selection must be justifiable, proportional and communicated to the player/their parents/carers.

A sample of the behaviours expected of a Harpenden Colts player is included in the Appendix as defined by the U10s from 2022/23.

### *Positional Rotation*

Positional rotation does not always need to be carried out within a match. But over the course of a series of matches or training a player should be given the opportunity to play and develop their skills in different positions.

There may be circumstances in which this rule can be relaxed. From U12 onwards, it is expected that players may voluntarily begin to focus on preferred positions.

### *No Bias*

Coaches should make sure that they do not favour any particular player or group of players in their decision making. For example, it does not help all players to develop if one member of the squad takes every corner and every free kick.

One issue that can arise in the context of equal playing time, is the selection of the coaches' children for a higher percentage of games than other players. If one coach is available to coach matches significantly more often than other coaches of the squad, it might be reasonable that their own child is selected for a higher percentage of matches



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However, if in any squad there are at least two other coaches regularly available to coach matches, the coaches' children should not be given any preference in terms of selection for matches/being rested, as management of the squad at matches can be rotated between coaches.

### *Substitutes*

The number of players taken to a match will depend on a variety of factors, including the fitness of the squad, the nature of the opposition and the weather. If it is very cold, fewer subs are recommended as players can get very cold on the side line.

However, the Club recommends that the number of subs generally does not exceed the following:-

- 5x5 – 1 sub
- 7x7 – 2 subs
- 9x9 – 2 subs
- 11x11 – 3 subs

In youth football, the squad is not selected in terms of a starting line-up and substitutes, but in terms of a squad that will play the match together, taking into account rotation of players during the match so that each member of the squad plays at least 50% of the match. The Club recommends that in planning matches you:-

- Avoid starting every match with the same players as substitutes
- Avoid substituting the same player multiple times during the same match – although this may sometimes be necessary in the event of injury or fitness issues



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### **5. Registration**

Year Group Leads/Squad Leads are responsible for ensuring that all players within the year group are registered on the Colts Members database. Squad Leads (and prior to squad formation the Year Group Lead) should not allow players to train or play matches who are not registered on the database.

A limited exception to the above rule may be made in relation to training (not league matches) for new members who are trying out Colts for a short period.

Each year group will appoint a Club Registration Officer who is responsible for ensuring that all players who play league football in the year group are registered on the FA Whole Game System and allocated to the correct squad.

### **6. Tournaments**

Year Group Leads/Squad Leads may wish to enter their squad into one or more of the many football tournaments or festivals that are run throughout the year, however, there is no obligation on them to do so.

The club will pay for 1 tournament per squad to a maximum cost of £60. Any other tournaments will be self-funded by the relevant squad.

### **7. Discipline**

Each Club Volunteer/parent/player is bound by the Harpenden Colts Code of Conduct.

For minor behavioural issues during training or matches, coaches are encouraged to issue verbal warnings and, if inappropriate behaviour persists, to exclude the player from the relevant session for 5-10 minutes.

Squad Leads may restrict a player from participating in one, or a number of, league matches if poor behaviour is serious and/or persistent but the reasons should be communicated to the player and their parents/carers.

Squad Leads, Squad Coaches and parents/carers should report any more serious incidents to the Year Group Lead. If the Year Group Lead feels it is appropriate, he should inform the Management Committee. The Club's disciplinary procedures will then be followed, and any action will be agreed between the Year Group Lead and the Management Committee.

For further information about behaviour management, please refer to the Harpenden Colts Behaviour Management Guide. The club also runs two behaviour management workshops each season to support coaches with the behaviour of their squad or certain players in it.



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### **8. *Participation in Higher Level Sport***

This section addresses the approach to be taken by a squad lead if any of the players in their squad participate in higher level sport which may affect their participation in training and matches.

Higher level sport refers to sporting activities considered to be above grass roots football, including participation in a legitimate pre-academy football scheme. The FMC will decide from time-to-time which activities it considers to be higher level sport.

If a member of a squad is involved in higher level sport, the Squad Lead is able to apply a three-step process to evaluate the impact of the players absence from training/matches on the application of the rules in this Policy about equal play time. If the Squad Lead has a conflict of interest (i.e., the player is the Squad Lead's son or daughter), the evaluation will be made by the Year Group Lead with a recommendation made by them to the Squad Lead about squad management.

The three steps to be considered are: -

- Firstly, a presumption is made that non-attendance at training will result in deselection for matches the following match day.
- But discretion is to be exercised in favour of selection, if the player is available, if there is a good reason for absence at training, due to participation in higher level sport.
- Finally, the interests of the absent player must be weighed/balanced against the interests of the other squad members who are attending training regularly

Any disputes in relation to decisions made pursuant to this Section 8 will be referred to the FMC of the Club, whose decision on the matter shall be final.





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### **Harpenden Colts FC Commitment Charter U10s**

#### These commitments and habits will make a great Harpenden Colts player

**Harpenden Colts' players....** are always **welcoming** to new players  
are **focused** and always try their best.  
**attend training** (unless it is impossible to do so).  
always **let coaches know** if they can't attend training  
or matches.  
are **positive when communicating** to teammates  
and coaches  
always **respect** each other, coaches, the opposition,  
parents/carers and **the referee**.  
**always follow the habits below** (*as written by Colts  
players!*)

#### **Preparation (Before a Match)**

- Always be early for training and matches
- Practice for at least 10-15 minutes per day
- Have a good sleep the night before training or a match
- Get your kit bag ready the night before (don't forget warm clothes).
- Eat healthy food no more than 1.5 hours before training/match (allow time to digest).
- Drink water regularly before you play.
- Limit the use of electronic screen devices for at least 2 hours before matches and training.
- Tie your shoelaces properly before training and matches.
- Allow some time (5 minutes) to relax without any noise ahead of playing.
- Make sure you warm-up well and practice the skills needed in the match.
- Listen carefully to the coaches' instructions.
- Look forward to the training/match – it should be fun.

#### **Action (During a Match)**

- Listen to coaches' instructions and focus on what you need to do.
- React positively to instructions and mistakes – no blame!
- Try your best to improve your performance and the team.
- Play with intensity and work hard.
- Be brave, creative and positive – want the ball and especially under pressure!
- Subs should be ready to make a positive impact- stay warm & remain close to the coaches.
- Have serious fun!



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### **Reflection (After a Match)**

- Be good sportspeople - win, draw or lose - what did we learn from the performance?
- Drink water, eat healthily and rest – you should be tired.
- Remember what went well and what not so well for you and the team performance.
- Notice what the opposition did well - what habits can we borrow?
- Clean boots and equipment - the tools of the trade!
- Create a good reputation. Always leave the playing venue tidier than when you arrived - no litter.
- Look forward to the next game.

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Max. tournament cost covered amended January 2024.