

The Grading Process

Rationale

Why are we grading players?

The primary reason for grading players is to identify individuals of differing skill levels and encourage them to play in a challenging but enjoyable environment to enhance and encourage their football development.

This means young players are playing in an environment that is intellectually and physically stimulating through education and competition.

Remember, the player's enjoyment playing football comes above all else.

Guidelines

- Ensure that all players being graded are given equal time
- Accept that players will want to play with friends and that their enjoyment is your first priority.
- Ensure you have a clear club policy outlining how selection decisions are made and for which age groups and genders (e.g. grading and selection policies should differ between u8's and all age players.)
- Ensure that you have clear policy regarding mixed gender teams.
- That your team selection/grading policy is clearly communicated to parents, players and coaches.
- Be aware of the relative age effect ruling in your State (contact your member federation for more guidance).
- Have a defined process for informing people of selections and taking queries:
 - Try to use a more personal approach (e.g. in person, by email, or phone call) rather than public announcements
 - Make someone from your organisation available to give feedback on why a player was or wasn't successful in their aspirations.
- Try not to move/regrade individuals during the season, rather request a regrading/division for their team instead.

The 4 Core Skills:

1. Striking the ball

This includes all forms of striking the ball such as short/long passing; shooting and crossing

2. First touch

Controlling the ball with all allowed body parts

3. 1 v 1

All moves, feints and accelerations to get past and away from an opponent. We can also distinguish defensive skills such as various tackling techniques and it goes without saying that the defensive 1 v 1 skills are equally important and must be properly developed too.

4. Running with the ball

At speed (with a lot of space) or 'dribbling' (in tight areas), this includes techniques for protecting the ball and changing direction.

These four core skills cover 95% of the actions of any outfield player when in possession of the ball during a game of football. When grading players these four key skills are the most important factors in determining a young player's ability level. These are also the four core skills that the FFA National Football Curriculum outlines as most important in the development of young players.

Should a player show a particular ability or affinity for one or more of the skills, keep in mind that the other skills can be developed. That's what your coaches are there for!

Example Grading Sheet

Coaches are reminded that players are to be graded on the four core skills as follows:

1. Striking the ball.

This includes all forms of striking the ball such as short/long passing; shooting and crossing

2. First touch.

Controlling the ball with all allowed body parts

3. 1 v 1.

(In possession of the ball) - All moves, feints and accelerations to get past and away from an opponent.

(Without Possession of the ball) – Tackling, Interceptions and general defensive ability in 1v1 situations.

4. Running with the ball.

At speed (with a lot of space) or 'dribbling' (in tight areas), this includes techniques for protecting the ball and changing direction.

Players are to be graded on a score out of 5 during and post each round of games by the watching coach(es) and given a team recommendation during the open coach discussion post grading.

Example Sheet 1

Bib/No.	Player	Game 1				Game 2				Team Suggestion
		Striking Game 1	First Touch Game 1	1v1 Game 1	Running w) ball Game 1	Striking Game 2	First Touch Game 2	1v1 Game 2	Running w) ball Game 2	
	<i>Jonny Smith</i>	2	3	3	2	2	3	4	4	A/B
	<i>Harry Kewell</i>	3	3	4	5	3	4	5	4	A
	<i>Brett Emerton</i>	4	2	2	5	3	3	3	5	A/B
	<i>Tom Rogic</i>	3	5	3	4	2	4	3	4	A

Example Sheet 2

Bib/No.	Player	Game 1	Game 2	Team Recommendation	Comments
	<i>Jonny Smith</i>				
	<i>Harry Kewell</i>				
	<i>Brett Emerton</i>				
	<i>Tom Rogic</i>				