



Girls' Junior Framework

Tailor-made pathway for Girls

Foreword

Women's football is on the rise in New Zealand, with continued growth year on year. The Football Ferns are currently sitting 18th on the Fifa world rankings; and have the World cup in June where they want to be able to not only push the top sides but beat them. The ferns have achieved notable milestones at global competitions, such as reaching the quarter final stages at the 2012 London Olympics. They have also achieved historic wins and won points against the world's best, Brazil, England and Japan.

To build on the success of the Football Ferns, we need to grow the depth in the women's game. The latest participation numbers still suggest that we are behind Netball. For example, there are 23,500 registered females playing football, whereas netball has 134,000 registered players. The ferns progress on the international stage will play its part in attracting new players, but we also need to increase the avenues for young girls to play football, by reducing the barriers to involvement and offering girls only junior football.

Why girls-only football? The Waikato and Bay of Plenty region is behind the eight ball in offering a girls-only completion. Other regions throughout New Zealand have successfully offered girls-only competitions for many years and this is evident through their success in the women's northern league, National women's league and feeding players through to the national teams. By offering a non-threatening environment it would not only grow the game, it would ensure we retain our players and they remain committed to football. For example, New Zealand Football held an extensive review of junior football and found that over half of the girls currently playing mixed football wanted to play girls-only football but couldn't as it was not on offer at their local club.

Girls have different social needs compared to boys and the experiences girls have playing in a male dominated environment are not always positive. This is a crucial time of development for girls because they are at a stage where they are the most trainable. It is important to maximise this by providing a development structure that offers more touches, more opportunities and more hours playing football.

New Zealand Football Pathway

Within the framework, there is a tailor-made pathway for females to participate in football, which offers either a girls-only or mixed football environment, depending on the wants and needs of the player.



Additional information on NZF framework here; <http://www.nzfootball.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/GirlsJuniorFramework2011.pdf>

Girls-Only Winter League Format

One of the main differences between mixed and girls-only football is the playing formats. The **primary reason** for this is the amount of technical development required in girls football.

The primary reasons for smaller side games in girls football are;

1. *More touches on the ball increases technical development.*
2. *Fewer players per team*
3. *Fewer players per team makes creating a team easier*
4. *More teams allows for a more competitive league*
5. *Able to fit more pitches per full sized pitch, better use of limited facilities.*

	U7	U9	U11	Open Grade
Squad size	8	8	10	10
Playing format	5v5	5v5	7v7	7v7
Goal Keeper	no	no	yes	yes
Game Duration	15mins / way 5 mins break	20mins / way 5 mins break	25 mins / way 5 mins break	30 mins / way 5 mins break
Ball size	Size 3	Size 4	Size 4	Size 4
Pitch dimensions	20 x 30m	20 x 30m	35 x 55m	35 x 55m
Goal dimensions	2 x 1m	2 x 1m	4 x 2 m	4 x 2 m
Goal box	no	no	no	no
Penalty area	no	no	16 x 8 m	16 x 8 m

Additional information

What are the benefits of a girl's-only league?

Firstly, it ensures that females have a clear pathway through their footballing lives and are aware of the amazing opportunities female football can create for them. Many New Zealand female footballers are living this dream, having competed at the Olympics, at World Cups, playing professionally overseas and achieving top university scholarships.

Secondly, long term it will increase the number of females playing football and also improve the standard of the female game within our region. The girls will be playing in an environment that better meets their physical and social needs, where they will get more touches on the ball and which will boost their development compared to a male dominated environment.

Finally, it will be an effective tool used by both clubs and WaiBOP to identify talented girls for the reps and FTC programs. It will become possible for scouts to attend and watch a large number of girls playing. As well as, ensuring that clubs are nominating deserving girls, as in the past girls have been missed because they have been compared with boys.

How will the girls-only league be implemented?

The girls-only winter league will be piloted in the Hamilton region for the 2015 season and we aim to implement it into the other Waikato bay of plenty regions the following year. The duration of the league is the same as the current mixed format, running from the 2nd of May to the 5th of September. It will be run on a Saturday, along with the mixed football, with draws available via the WaiBOP website. Registration via Goalnet is already open and will close on the 9th of April.

Our goal this season is to have a minimum of eight teams in each age group and once the awareness of the league increases and the number of girls playing grows, there will be multiple divisions in each age group.

What are the expectations of clubs and why do they need to support it?

The girls-only winter league will require the support of clubs to help drive and promote this competition, as they have the closest contact with parents and their daughters. Word of mouth is a powerful tool and having a positive and enthusiastic girl's only coordinator within the club would be hugely beneficial in attracting girls and their parents.

Ideally clubs will automatically place girls into the girls-only teams; unless an exceptionally talented girl requests to play in the boy's league, and then they must be on par with boys at the same age. Clubs may have parents wanting their daughters to continue playing with boys because they believe they will

be exposed to a higher level of competition, which will make them into better footballers; However, a girl will develop quicker in a girls environment as they will be exposed to a greater number of touches on the ball and combining this with a growing pool of females footballers, the competition levels will increase.

In the first year it is critical clubs work together ensuring that no girls miss out on this opportunity. For example, if a club has twelve players in there 11th grade team they would ideally communicate this with the Women's development officer, Holly Nixon, who would then liaise with other clubs to see if the two girls could make up a team at a different club. Holly will also be working hard promoting the league within schools and the community, and ensuring communication between WaiBOP and the clubs is strong.

This is an exciting opportunity to help path a way for females in football. It is a first for the Hamilton region and will require some hard work for the first year as change is difficult.

Best practice model - Capital football

Key achievements

- Girls only leagues in three separate hubs running across the region - Inter hub festival days (every three weeks) to allow for variety in opposition
- 48 teams and approximately 450 kids
- Full roll out of Girls Only Framework (7-12yrs) - Including 13/14 grade pilot
- Leagues supported by girls-only 'Fun Football Centres', with approximately 150 girls being coached, and 'Skills Centres' where 21 girls are being coached to aim to get into an FTC squad next year.
- Football in schools – 580 girls coached over two terms
- Girls and Women's week – 1250 girls visited. A schools festival was held at the ASB centre where each team represented a football fern. One off after school sessions and weekend festivals were held to help encourage girls and get them playing.

Key success factors

- Girls-only coordinators at clubs - Promoted leagues and helped get girls into schools and encourage new girls to play.
- Teachers and sports coordinators at schools – built relationships and promoted leagues, as well as encouraged new girls to play.
- Regular contact with NZF, WDO's, FDO's
- Football in schools – brought many new girls to the game.
- Communication with key stakeholders; Women's football newsletter
- Girls and Women's CF Facebook page
- Flexibility
- Mums involved in managing and coaching
- Sponsorship to reduce cost for girls

2014 female participation numbers

If there was a girls-only league run last year, the figures from goal net suggest there would have been the following teams;

	U7 – 3 teams U9 – 4 teams U11 – 2 teams Open – 1 team		U7 – 1 teams U9 – 2 teams U11 – 1 teams		U9 – 1 teams U11 – 1 teams
	U9 – 1 teams U11 – 1 teams Open – 1 team		U7 – 1 teams U9 – 1 teams U11 – 1 teams Open – 1 team		Open – 1 team
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	U9 – 2 teams U11 – 1 teams		U7 – 1 teams U9 – 2 teams U11 – 1 teams		

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the girls-only winter league please contact Holly Nixon, WaiBOP Women's Development Officer on;

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