JANUARY 2024

5 YEAR STRATEGIC FOOTBALL PLAN

2024-2029



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Aims

At all stages, the goal of our football program is to prepare our players, both male and female, to run out of the Lanham Park Tunnel at a senior level, whether that be within a Premier League standard competition, or within a Community level team.

Grange Thistle Football Club must have a multi-faceted delivery approach which places value on our ‘community’ footballers, whilst simultaneously encouraging all players to strive for a better standard through the provision of Academy Level participation at higher levels.



About Grange Thistle FC

Grange Thistle Football Club is a progressive football organization located within an inner city precinct with huge population pressures and a lack of readily available field space to increase participation opportunities for our community. In 2024 we have over 1300 football playing members ranging in age from 4 to 55.

The Club has seen exceptional growth in female playing numbers over the last five years, with our participation numbers increasing by over 30% and demand continuing to grow.

Grange Senior men's and women's teams compete in the Football Queensland Premier League 2 competitions, the fourth tier of Football Australia's Competition structure. Additionally, Grange has a Tier 2 boys Academy program from Under 10 to Under 18. Finally the Club provides participation in Community level competitions from Under 6 to Over 45 for both male and female players.

About Grange Thistle FC

Being an inner-city Club, we are essentially land locked however we do have expansion opportunities which are in various stages of progression, namely;

- Grange Bowls Club | plans are well advanced for the expansion of our playing areas to create three artificial futsal sized pitches on the two top bowling greens. The Development Application has been lodged and any development will be subject to government support and funding, estimated to be approx. $1.75M – $2.0M.

- Somerset Hills State School | Approved plans for two training pitches, complete with lighting and creep irrigation, storage and change facilities. Grange Thistle specific funding for $2.5M from Qld State Government already secured. Construction will start in December 2023.

- Roy Harvey Park | Grange Thistle are a long term license holder over these grounds which is renewed on a 6 monthly basis. The field has existing, albeit substandard lighting. Plans have been created for a multi-use facility on this ground. This needs Brisbane City Council support for the provision of further participation opportunities at this ground. Estimated costs $1M.

SWOT Analysis

Below is a review of our current position in the market, prepared by the working group. It is intended to identify where we are strong, but likewise the areas that we need to improve.

STRENGTHS

- One of the oldest clubs in Brisbane – highly recognizable brand.
- Inner city location with huge urban renewal possibilities.
- Changing demographics is driving football participation.
- One of the best clubhouse facilities in Brisbane with future growth potential.
- Grange Bowls Club provides future expansion potential, particularly for casual football.
- Strong senior setup with both male and female teams pushing for promotion.
- Culture is strong within many of our playing groups.
- Excellent past players network. Increasingly becoming a network of both male and female supporters who enjoyed their time at Grange.
- Good community engagement at squirts levels
- Excellent entry level participation opportunity.
- Scale to allow for paid staff to reduce administration burden on volunteers.
- Improving Football Queensland (FQ) assessments show the right growth direction.
- Solid financial position.

WEAKNESSES

- 2.5 fields at Lanham Park causes overuse. Somerset Hills School opportunities should alleviate some of these issues.
- Field maintenance costs have been high and we expect continued pressure on expenditure.
- Other clubs have moved past us in the 'pecking order' over the past 5 years. Lacking engagement and support from FQ, particularly in the female academy space.
- Lack of internal investment in coaching staff has led to succession issues.
- Unfinished projects are of concern – need to push to complete changeroom and disability toilet projects. Funding submission has been made to Qld Government to complete this project.
- Lack of focus on sponsorship revenue.
- At a playing level, we have a gap in our program once our juniors enter teenage years. For many, the jump between under 17's – 23's for females and 18's – 23's for males is too great.
- Lack solid football culture at junior level. Individual teams have a strong culture, but this isn't club wide. What does Grange Thistle stand for?

SWOT Analysis

Below is a review of our current position in the market, prepared by the working group. It is intended to identify where we are strong, but likewise the areas that we need to improve.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Greater Engagement with Football Queensland. Building understanding of Grange Thistle's ambitions and ongoing development.
- Leverage playing field opportunities by progressing Somerset Hills and Roy Harvey Park to increase participation opportunities.
- Focus on having the best Female Platform in the league, including infrastructure. Become a Club of choice for female talent which will thus drive FQ engagement and sponsorship opportunities.
- Huge potential of FC1919 Rapid Acceleration (RAP), school holiday programs and other additional revenue streams.
- Potential to build artificial fields on two top bowling greens. Provides training space (and reduce field overuse) and casual football space which is a revenue generator.
- Create a pipeline of coaches via our junior ranks through mentor programs
- Create a pipeline of Referees. Grange Thistle should be aiming to provide support to our game as a whole by encouraging, mentoring and overall valuing of football referees.
- Look for alternative revenue streams - minimising parent and player fees - not losing focus of our value proposition.

THREATS

- Uncertainty of where Grange fits within Football Queensland's strategic plan for Advanced Junior Football.
- Without a successful Tier 1 assessment we will struggle to maintain our FQ Academy status and deliver the quality of player required to be able to play senior NPL/FQPL level football that our seniors sides play in. This means that to be successful at senior level we would need to "buy in" players good enough to be competitive.
- Lack of harmony between the Junior and Senior setups. We need a clear pathway for Juniors (both female and male) to enter into our senior playing ranks.
- Lack of harmony between male and female setups – we need equality in everything we do. We are aligned with FQ's ambition for gender parity by 2027 but need to plan how this can be achieved, particularly given our lack of field space.
- Lack of harmony/pathways between Community and Academy levels in Juniors.
- Lack of succession planning. This is apparant in Board, Employee, Coaching structures. Processes and systems need to be in place to create smooth transition of roles.
- Normal business financial risks and general economy issues affecting our revenue generating exercises.
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Stages & Opportunities

The following table sets out the various stages of football development and outlines our key objectives for each stage of the football journey.

PRE-JUNIORS

- Continued focus on Squirts Program and expansion of our ‘games’. Need to continually change up this offering.
- Consider mid-week Squirts Programs – i.e Mid-week morning for preschool aged children.
- Easy Administration path from Squirts to Junior teams.

JUNIORS UNDER 7 & 8

- Need a better Coaching ‘Handbook’ to get children engaged in the game quicker.
- Focus on basic skills – how to kick, first touch, passing, shooting etc.
- Online platform to be utilized with ‘Coaching How To’ guides to lay out sessions for our Junior volunteer Coaches.
- Better appreciation of Coaches and Managers at presentation events.
- Aim is to provide a template for our volunteers to get children ready for the next stage.

Stages & Opportunities

The following table sets out the various stages of football development and outlines our key objectives for each stage of the football journey.

SAP PHASE JUNIORS (UNDER 8 TO 12)

- Introduction of a better standard of coaching, 1 hour midweek coaching sessions for Community teams, 2 x 1 hour for Academy teams.
- Focus on basics – touches, turns, passing, shooting, decision making, positioning…. How to throw a ball in!
- Identification of better players and nurturing this talent.
- This is the level for us to introduce new coaches – investment in C licensed coaches at under 23's levels.
- FC 1919 RAP is the third session that will give children more touches on the ball – our program is all about turns and touches, needs to be dynamic and well organized.
- Difference between Community level and Academy. Need clearly defined pathway between these two groups. If a child doesn't make it one year, how do they improve for next year? FC 1919 RAP is the solution we can provide.
- Focus on better equipment and buying decisions. Easy win for the Club by providing a better quality of equipment, using our buying power to leverage pricing. Focus on important items for the football journey – balls, bibs, goals, mannequins – as opposed to new kits each and every year.

Stages & Opportunities

The following table sets out the various stages of football development and outlines our key objectives for each stage of the football journey.

YOUTH PHASE (UNDER 13 TO 18)

- Difference between Community level and Academy. Need clearly defined pathway between these two groups. If a child doesn't make it one year, how do they improve for next year? FC 1919 RAP is the solution we can provide.
- At a Community level, provision of a 'How to Guide' on training sessions for all volunteer coaches to deliver. Try to get ex senior players as coaches, regardless of coaching badges, experience will help.
- At Academy level, always be looking to elevate our coaching standards. C's to B's. B's to A's. Grange to invest in this coaching structure via contractual arrangements.
- Be a Club that is an 'attractor' of coaching and playing talent. We do this via a strong culture, better coaching support via our app and Technical Directors interactions and being a value proposition.
- Goal is to have one licensed coach per age group in 2024. Age groups to be trained as squads, with one mentored junior coach to assist in the program. Idea is to have a ready group of coaches always coming through with experience. This group of 'mentored coaches could include suitable parents or friends of the Club.
- Goal in 2025 will be to have at least 3 x B licensed or above coaches within our setup.

Stages & Opportunities

The following table sets out the various stages of football development and outlines our key objectives for each stage of the football journey.

JUNIORS TO SENIOR TRANISITON

- We aim to have over 50% 'home grown' talent in our FQPL senior teams within 5 years.
- Senior coaches to take an active role in the Under 18’s (male) and Under 17 (female). Not just in coaching as such, but also with more visibility and presence at games and sessions.
- Introduction of Under 20’s metro side for female players to support their transition into senior leagues.
- Event promotion to encourage bigger crowds at Lanham Park for all senior games – need to promote local culture. Thistle Pisstle, better game day experience, better food offerings etc.
- Focus on whole of club development by encouraging under 23’s players to be part of the coaching solution by facilitating suitable candidates to obtain C-License credentials and be involved in developing the next generation.

Other Key Long Term Drivers

The following items are additional areas we see as critical for whole of community engagement, and thus the long term success of the Club.

- Aim to secure funding for 3 x small sided artificial fields on the two top bowling greens. Futsal activities may form part of the remit of our coaching staff, particularly given likely off-season participation of our players. This project is aimed at driving both participation opportunities (and thus revenue) but also Bar and Café revenue at the Bowls Club.
- Walking Football Programs need to be considered should artificial surfacing be secured.
- Junior Football (squirts and up) also fits within this ethos. All programs should come under the umbrella of our Football Department.
- Alternative participation opportunities to be offered as part of any artificial surface, including Yoga, Pilates, Group Training, Cricket etc. The aim is to get an overarching participation community, as opposed to being just a football club.
- Bowls to continue at Grange if economically viable and participation levels are there. Bowls members need to grow and create their own participation plan.
- Thistle Fit Program expansion to both Female and Male. Initial year was a learning curve but showed some positive outcomes for both the Club and the participants.

Key Performance Indicators

We will measure this Plan by the following key metrics;

FQ Assessment

75%

Club to complete a Tier one assessment prior to 2025 and thereafter. Aim for 75 score or better per annum.

Equality



Grange Thistle aims to have a Tier one Academy Program for both boys and girls prior to 2025. A separate Female specific development plan to be constructed with required internal and external stakeholders.

Improvement

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At least 2 Community level teams per age group in boys, girls, Senior men's and women's.
The club to place importance upon the participation opportunities provided within our Community setup.
The Club to provide more specific support of coaches to improve standards across our Community levels of football. Measurement will be in improving standards in 2024.

Key Performance Indicators

We will measure this Plan by the following key metrics;

Player Retention



Aim to have 80%+ year on year retention across the Football Club.

Community Enagagement & Satisfaction



We will create a whole of Club satisfaction survey in 2024 – separated by players and parents, Community and Academy. Measurement is first and foremost just getting the survey done and then assessing the feedback contained therein. Survey results to be reviewed yearly and used to develop improvement across the Club and its Programs.

Financial Stability



First aim is to ensure continued sustainability as a not for profit. Second goal is to look for an infrastructure buffer of $50,000 per annum to be spent back on infrastructure upgrades (as opposed to maintenance).

We will do this by –

- Increasing FC1919 RAP participation levels, aiming for 200 participants per term. It is anticipated that this program will have wider appeal than just the Grange Thistle membership base.
- Maintaining school holiday program engagement.
- Promoting 6 a side early and continuing the excellent start on this program. Aim for 800 participants in 2024.



Short Term Planning

Grange Thistle has implemented the following plans for 2024 to address the abovementioned staging plan and set us on the right course to achieve the goals of our 5 year strategic plan;

- We have created a role called Head of Football (Technical Director) and have secured the services of Jack Sullivan who holds an AFC / FFA B-License to drive our programs forward. The role and remit is to create processes and systems that allow us to deliver a memorable footballing experience throughout our junior setup, and ensure Grange Thistle juniors are aware of the opportunities presented by participating in senior football at Grange Thistle.

- We will have one ‘Head Coach’ per Academy level age group with the aim to have this coach assisted by a ‘Developing Coach’ who will likely be a Grange Thistle player who is not yet qualified. The aim is to have coaches develop under the tutelage of a qualified (i.e C-License or better) coach and be ready to take teams of their own once they gain qualifications. Ideally these ‘Developing Coaches’ may be finishing school or university and have a long term record of participation at Grange Thistle.

- We will develop and implement an app to make sharing of coaching plans, sessions and tracking of player data across our club easier. All coaches across our club will have access to the data necessary to make their roles easier and more enjoyable.



Short Term Planning

- We will have a stronger focus on data management and communication with parents and players. John Weaver has accepted the Vice President role for 2024 and has a specific remit to help to fix how we manage our CRM and engagement platforms.

- We are setting up a Female Academy for 2024 in training only. All systems, processes and technical staff will be in place for an entry into the FQAL Female Academy Leagues in 2025. The Head of Football and the Board will be lobbying Football Queensland throughout 2024 to ensure our entry into this competition, with similar favourable entry conditions that they have allowed other clubs to enter with in 2024. We will spend 2024 getting ready but will be advertising for suitable players in 2025, expect age groups to be under 9's, 11's and 13's in the first year. We will be trying to get all of our junior girls back who have been forced to travel to other clubs for academy opportunities.

- Our aim is to complete a Tier One assessment in 2024 or at least be ready to do so. This part of the process is by application to Football Queensland – essentially they have to accept us as a club to do a Tier One assessment. Without a Tier One assessment we are unlikely to get any invitations to progress out of the FQAL4 boys competition. This is a primary aim of the club.

- Finally our Senior teams will both be striving for promotion. Plans are in place to increase sponsorship revenue to support anticipated increases in team nomination fees and costs to support participation in an FQPL1 league in the future. Value will be placed on the pathways for our Grange Juniors to progress from Under 17's / 18's into our senior playing environment.

Conclusion

This Football Plan articulates our goals. To be clear – every Junior player who pulls on a Grange Thistle jersey should be aiming at playing within our Senior environment. Lifelong friendships are made through sport – we need to value the experience at Club level and provide the very best opportunities for our players. We will ultimately be a Club which is developing and attracting enough talent due to our culture. Thus the Football Queensland aims, which solely revolve around creating the next batch of Socceroos or Matilda's, are also satisfied as a byproduct of the Grange Thistle methodology.

Grange Thistle first – Socceroo's and Matilda's second.

Yours Faithfully

Anthony White

Grange Thistle FC President