



# JDL / DNA Day 2025

How & what we  
coach



### **Our mission**

Aspiring to grow an inclusive environment that supports greatness in its players, people and community, through a best in practice integrated football ecosystem

# **NWSF DNA**

**Smart / Skilful / Athletic / Relentless / Tribal**

**Environment**

**People**

**Game**

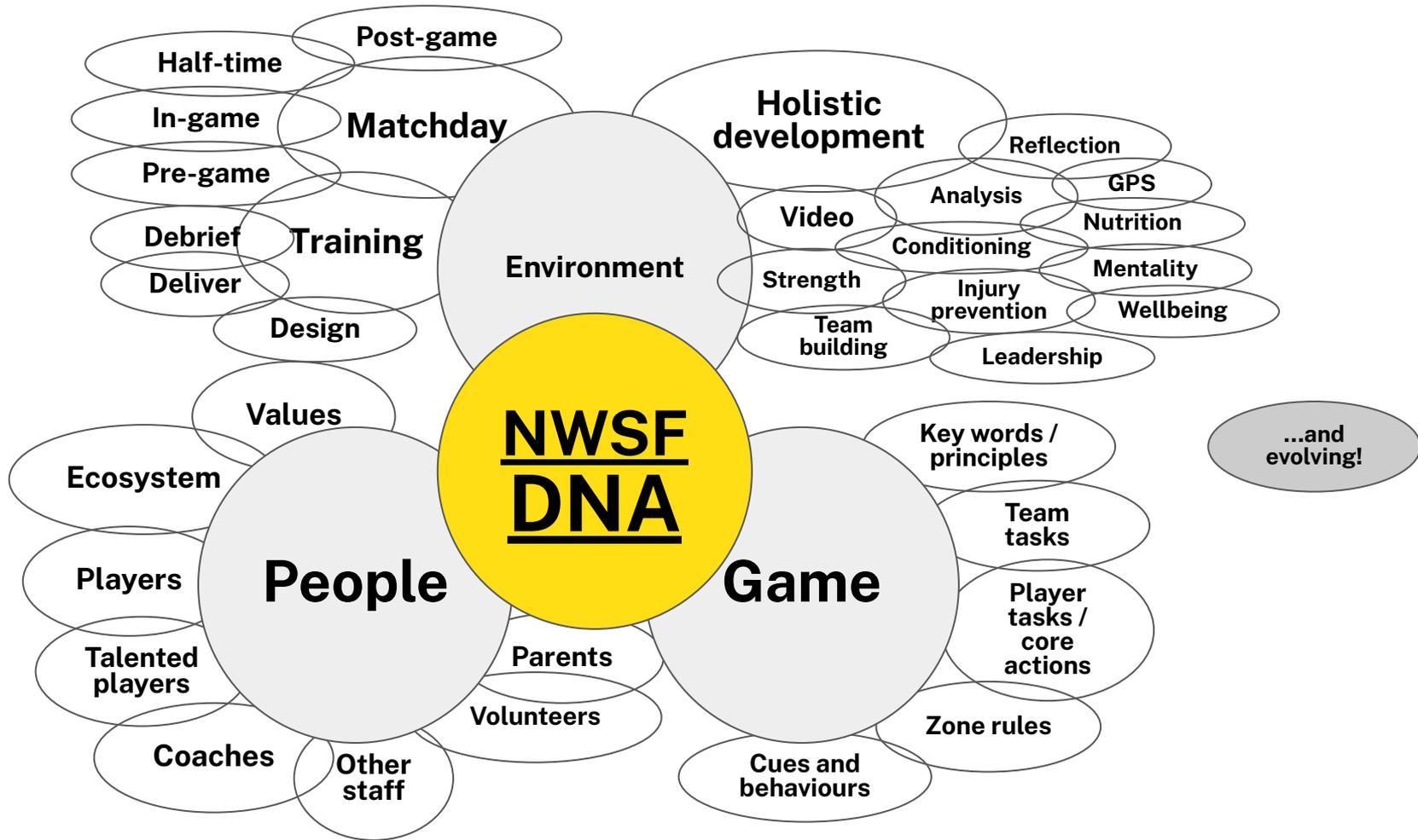
### **Our football goal**

High quality people and players, who have the DNA qualities, and a winning mentality, that enables them to play at their highest level in football, and in life



# A person with great DNA qualities...

<b>Smart</b>	People who understand the game and link this to the skills needed to perform
<b>Skilful</b>	People who have highly effective & adaptive skills and decision-making under pressure
<b>Athletic</b>	People who are consistently available and prepared for the various demands of football and life
<b>Relentless</b>	People who constantly strive to develop themselves and are resilient to challenges & setbacks
<b>Tribal</b>	People who are committed to their environments and the people within them
<b>X-factors</b>	<i>Players at the highest level typically not only develop all of these attributes, but can be distinguished or separated from their peers in one or more of these key words</i>





# Junior Development League (JDL)

## 2025 Coaching Handbook

“**Sustained** effective coaching is rarely the result of an individual coach acting in isolation, but the development of a **community** that **interacts** to create a rich **environment** for developing athletes”.



## Key Beliefs:

- We believe that high-quality **people** develop as a result of their **environment** and their experiences **playing the game**.
- **We do not view JDL as a ‘production line’**. We embrace complexity, mistakes, and aspire to provide a **transformative, rather than transactional experience** for our players. It is our duty to **foster a deep love for football** and ensure our players continue to love playing the game and enjoy coming to Spirit.
- We believe that in order to be the **‘best in the world’**, we must challenge conventions of what is typically understood as best practice in football development and aspire to **be innovators**. We do this by taking an **evidence based approach** by embracing emerging, and challenging existing ‘coaching’ and ‘football’ paradigms.



# What do we coach?

- Competitive games where we **keep score** and drive good decisions/actions using mantras.
- Our starting point is ‘**scoring goals**’, in that we encourage our players to look to score and create **poacher** goals constantly
- If we can’t score, we encourage our players to **keep the ball**, especially by using both feet to receive the ball, to move the ball away from defenders, and to pass with both feet
- Without the ball, encourage players to be **dominant defenders**, willing to be aggressive in 1v1 duels & **win the ball back quickly**



# **Our NWS Spirit training environment**



# Day to Day, training will look like:

- **Arrival Activities** (1v2) will be before the start of every session, and will be delivered collectively, with the goal that it will become player led.
- **Practice consists of two blocks (Block A,B)**. Players will be exposed to different number of opponents and pitch size in each block.
- We utilise a **'shared-training-space'** approach, whereby squads swap location for Block A to Block B. We do this because it gives us more flexibility with pitch dimensions and encourages us to be intuitively collaborative.
- **'Session plans' are co-designed:** Initially, leadership staff prescribe the practices and global themes that coaches are expected to deliver. **Team coaches are responsible for planning the messages they will deliver to the group/individuals based on observation, trends and IDPs etc.** This is because we believe that the coach is the person that knows their 'squad' the best and we want to ensure the player remains the focus of the team coach, not the practice choice. **Coaches are expected to have a physical session plan on them when coaching.**



# What does a session plan 'look like'?

These parts written by coaches.

Design	Deliver (Global)	Deliver (Individual)	Debrief:
3v2 Stadium (wave) 4:30-5:15	<b>Get Free Enough to Score (Poacher)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Get yourself free enough to score</li><li>- Get the ball to someone who is free enough to score.</li></ul> <b>Give and GO Rule for scoring on for at least 1x block</b>	Tom / John / Sam → Can you use more give and go's?	Keep Doing:
5v5 Stadium 5:15-6:00		Hamish / Ben / Lucy → 1v1 defending	
		All the poachers → stay off shoulder / run around	Start Doing
		Tom / John / Sam → Can you use more give and go's?	
		Hamish / Ben / Lucy → 1v1 defending	Stop Doing
All the poachers → stay off shoulder / run around			

These part's written by JDL leadership.

Can we get these happening on a wider level.

But, also ensure we keeping a focus on individuals



# Overarching JDL ‘Deliver’ principles:

- Keep the focus on playing the game, **maximise ball-rolling** opportunities.
  - “Would they play more, or less football if the coach wasn’t there at all...” - this is the standard
- Be targeted, **thoughtful and intentional in your interactions** with players, considering the intended and unintended consequences it may have on the player. **(consider)**
  - For this reason, we encourage the interactions to **gradually become player-led**, facilitated through the coaches use of **questioning and active listening**.
- This may include, global, unit, individual interactions.
  - **Avoid long-winded speeches, presentations, tactical walkthroughs.**
  - Keep the focus on the players!
- We use **OUR Mantras** when ‘coaching on the run’ as a way to encourage certain interactions and help players to start to talk and communicate in our language.



# **Our NWS Spirit matchday environment**



# What is the purpose of matchday?

- Matchday is an **extension of the training week**, providing players the opportunity to develop their DNA in a competitive match environment
- Matchday is an opportunity for coaches to develop each individual players understanding of how to play as part of a team
  - Focus on a specific 'team task' and provide individual challenges.
- **Matchday will encompass safe, stretch and stress experiences** for players, through...
  - Rotation of player positions
  - Team/individual challenges set by the coaches
  - Opponents



# Overarching matchday principles

- **Warm-up:** physical literacy game, followed by a wave game or 5v5 game.  
*This means no two lines, rondos, passing patterns etc!*
- **Between Games:** We keep training, this means that while team 1 is playing, team 2 is doing another practice on a separate pitch, or on the side - lead by supporting JDL team coaches, this means all JDL Coaches are there for the entirety of Matchday. Having one team watching a game, is now our last resort.
- **Half-time:** does not need to resemble senior footballing environments! **This means no long winded speeches or tactical walkthroughs.**
  - Halftime could look like: small group player led discussions; individual practice i.e juggling, evaluation, goal setting etc - decided by coaching group together, at the start of each cycle.
- **Coaching:** Consider an intervention dial in terms of match-day involvement from sidelines. *“Is your voice more powerful than silence”?* Think ‘big picture’ everytime you speak. We are considered, deliberate and intentional with our coaching.



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