

# EVERGREEN FOOTBALL CLUB

## Club philosophy

In an age of social change, where there are a lack of modern day role models and the dawn of celebrity, there has never been more of a need for deep rooted philosophies, values and principles that strike a chord with the England of yesteryear. In Hertfordshire sits a developing Adult, Boys, Ladies & girls Football Club that believes in a philosophy centred on inclusion, fun and making life-long friends.

### **Overview**

Evergreen FC is a Charter Standard Community Club and first kicked a ball in 1970. The club has now grown to accommodate 400 boys and girls on their books, from the U5's through to seniors and have 65 FA qualified coaches running their teams. Their aim is to provide every boy and girl that has an interest in football with the opportunity to play and enjoy the game. Becoming a member of the club is not bound by ability or background, but is open to all, providing a haven for young people to grow and develop, make friends and have fun.

### **Ideal Experience**

For every child who is part of the club, new or existing, the ambition is to give them "What they expect, and a bit more". Coined as "The Evergreen Experience" by the team coaches through to the committee of the club, there is a strong feeling of team spirit and lying beneath that, family. If the coaches can have a positive effect on the life of a player as a whole, then it's a job well done. The club try to do this by making sure that coaches know the names of the children quickly, that the coaching sessions are fun and inclusive and that the approach to games is around participation rather than winning.

### **Role Models**

Throughout the club, there is a principle that perhaps the best role models for young people is not necessarily that of a Premier League Manager or Player. Boys and Girls who take part in football sessions are probably there for a whole different set of reasons to that of professional clubs, which mean that the end result is different and therefore their role models lie closer to home. This in turn gives a large and powerful role to that of the coach. The coaches here understand that it doesn't matter about knowing the name on the back of a shirt of a professional, but more about knowing the name of your coach and that they know yours in return.

### **Linking with The FA Programmes**

From working with the coaches on The FA programmes the club has been able to form and cement robust views on their philosophy and the why's and wherefores of what they do. The FA coaches have worked with the club coaches and our players at training sessions and also assisted in recruiting new players to join the ranks.

Through this link the club have the opportunity to develop their knowledge of the grassroots game. Some of the coaches from Evergreen have attended local schools running their football sessions and utilised the time to demonstrate how our club and programme link together. This has been completed by handing out leaflets and talking to our players about why they play their football. As a result of this numerous players have joined the club.

### **A sense of family**

From the committee level down to the under 6s, Evergreen FC sees itself more of a football family rather than that of a football club. There is a genuine sense of warmth which radiates from the teams, coaches and players. The club likes to generate a 'feel good factor' and spend time to organise social events for parents and children alike. In this environment the children can build real friendships, relax and take time to grow in to themselves. In the past the club have held BBQ's, 6-a-side Tournaments, Quiz nights and race nights which has embedded the values the club are teaching in different aspects of life.

### **The Future**

In 5 years' time the club aims to ensure that all of the playing members who are part of the club now, are still involved in sport in some way. Whether that is from gaining qualifications through to running a team, there is an emphasis throughout of creating a legacy of sport, and with that, the feel good factor attached. Even now, 10 of the coaches at the club have played through the age groups, and have gone on to take their FA Coaching qualifications and apply for coaching jobs in community football programmes.

### **Setting the right example**

Evergreen FC strives to make football much more than just a sporting experience. Their approach to developing children through fun reverberates throughout the various age groups and it is clear to see that they have adopted many of the philosophies and principles closely associated around player development. To see growing numbers of their ex-players take on the coaching route is testament to this. Football can be deceptive in its structure and it is easy to look at the professional game to try and gain a destination for young developing players. However, underneath the surface, the worlds of grassroots and professional football are very different, verging almost on being alternative sports. Sometimes we look at top managers and see their outward displays of passion and zeal and feel that this should be replicated on a grassroots stage. However, when dealing with a 7 year old who is playing because he or she wants to be with their friends, rather than a professional who is playing in a competition worth millions of pounds to his club, the goalposts must change.

Grassroots football needs to look elsewhere for its role models and within that the philosophies in which it manoeuvres. The classroom is often a good place to cast an eye on how to deal with difference and get the best out of young people. Teachers employ a range of teaching strategies to involve but also challenge all. It is hard to think of a modern day primary school teacher bellowing at a child because they made a mistake in mathematics, or misspelt a word in English. Schools structure their philosophies around working together and trying your best, rather than winning at all costs.

**Sidebar:**

Definition of philosophy: A set of ideas or beliefs relating to a particular field or activity. The FA's philosophy for working with young players is very clear. The organisation want, "...the grassroots game in this country to provide an arena in which the very youngest players can fall in love with the game of football..."

The Future Game: This outlines the coaching and playing philosophy for coaches and aspiring players, stating how the game should be played, and how young people should be involved in football – "Creating coaching environments which encourage young players to develop their technique, skill, creativity and game-understanding is central to our age-appropriate coaching philosophy and is the approach we would like all those in the grassroots game to adopt. To flourish in the game young players need coaches who are brave enough to encourage expression without a fear of failure and who also have knowledge of the variety of coaching methods that can be adopted to help young players learn the game".

Pro Club Philosophies: Across the professional game, clubs have ranging philosophies that focus upon development through to winning. Juventus operate a philosophy that states, "You cannot be a good player until you are a good person." Meanwhile Manchester United encourages all of their players, from youth team to community level to play in the same style, which develops a strong sense of team strength. We at Evergreen are now gearing up to have all our teams to play in the same style.