

Colt teams – pilot project - 2018

Proposal

1.0 Introduction

The concept of 'B' teams has been discussed in Scotland for some time to try to improve the quality of young player we are producing and ultimately improve the success of our national team. Significant discourse has taken place within the SPFL and SFA with regard to this initiative over many months and this paper has been produced as a consequence, with a view to implementing a 'pilot' project for season 2018/19. This Pilot project would run alongside proposals on a new 'reserve' league, potential league reconstruction in the lower divisions of the SPFL to be implemented at the end of the two year pilot and changes to the loans regulations to assist the development of our countries best talent. The 'B' team concept works successfully in many other countries and this paper is designed to challenge the barriers which seem to exist in Scotland to the implementation of 'B' teams which are the same ones as they have managed to overcome in many other countries who as a consequence are more successful when developing talent.

2.0 Executive Summary of Colt Team Proposal

2.1 Football Development

- Scotland not qualified for a World Cup or European Championship at 'A' squad level for over 20 years. U21's not qualified for European Championships since 1996. We must change and all of the Scottish football family are responsible for playing their part.
- Scotland perform exceptionally well at U16, U17 and U19 level. 37% of the players who match Europe's best at these ages are lost to the 21's, where success significantly declines, as a result of not playing first team football. The 37% tend to come from Rangers and Celtic and are replaced with lesser potential Scottish talent who are playing 1st team football at a smaller club where they may access the 1st team earlier. Can we maintain the performance of the 16's, 17's and 19's at 21's by exposing our top potential Scottish talent to 1st team football against men earlier.
- 'B' teams work, this is not a new concept. 84% of the German national 'A' squad have played in 'B' teams during their development years (86% of their 21's). 48% of the Spanish national 'A' squad have played in 'B' teams (84% of their 21's). In comparable sized countries such as Norway, Holland, etc. it is normal practice and operates with great success. The research has shown it works, we have no barriers in Scotland which would prevent it working here that did not exist in these other successful countries.
- This proposal has the full backing of the SFA Performance Director, Malky Mackay.

All levels of the game in Scotland have a responsibility to contribute to the improvement of our national game which will bring a more successful national team, better players and rising standards, an improved feel good factor, more income to invest in the game and will encourage more players to play and supporters to watch. We must all play our part and we all have a responsibility.

2.2 The Financials for League Two Clubs

- Guaranteed purchase of 250 tickets per match @£10 per head by colt teams - **£15,000** of guaranteed income per club. It would be up to the colt team to sell these tickets to their supporters removing the risk from the League Two side.
- If two teams participated with Colt Teams based on a 12 team league with 33 games per season this would result in a guaranteed investment in League 2 of **£150,000**
- Additional income from match day walk ups, hospitality, additional sponsor income via increased TV and media coverage, catering, etc.
- Based on the 33 game proposal each League Two club would have a minimum of 1, maximum of 2 **more home games**. A minimum of 4 **less away games**. This would further increase income and reduce costs.
- With three less games overall it would allow fewer midweek games, **increasing attendance figures** and / or reducing the length of the season resulting in reduced length player contracts **saving money** over the summer.

This money and more importantly significantly increased media interest will inject exciting new life into SPFL League Two football.

2.3 League Integrity

- A pilot, no permanent league structure changes.
- Colt teams cannot take promotion or relegation places from League Two teams.
- Colt teams cannot bring players down from their 1st team and must register a squad list from window to window to ensure consistency of opposition for all teams.
- A minimum of two directors from the Colt team club must attend the opposition boardroom in League Two, even if their first team are playing
- The criteria for staff is very high in order to provide the elite young players with the correct environment equivalent to other countries who successfully produce players and will require clubs to make a significant financial contribution and have these staff available at the same time as their first team play on a Saturday at 3.00pm. This expense along with the need to underwrite 250 tickets for every match @£10 per ticket will restrict the number of clubs participating and ensure that the lower leagues are not flooded with Colt Teams. Discussions at the SPFL so far indicate it would only be two clubs for the pilot.
- An opportunity, while the pilot is operating for two years, for discussion to run concurrently on league reconstruction options for season 2020/21 onwards.

This would allow the views of the lower league teams to be heard and considered in full.

The colt team proposal in detail

It was agreed that the following criteria for a pilot project should be submitted to the CWG for consideration:

<p>1. Player eligibility</p>	<p>Similar to the system used in UEFA competitions, a colt team squad list containing players registered with the club would be submitted to the SPFL in advance of the season starting. Amendments to this squad list would be permitted during transfer windows.</p> <p>The squad list would comprise a minimum of 20 full-time players. The squad would predominantly consist of under 21 players (born on or after 1 January 1998) with the possibility of 2 over age players (not from the 1st team but actually registered in the squad list to help guide and teach the young players). The overage players would count towards the minimum squad requirement.</p> <p>Clubs would also have the ability to promote players into the colt team squad from CAS age groups at any time, provided they are registered with the club and aged 16 years or over. Such players would not count for the purposes of minimum/maximum squad sizes.</p>
<p>2. Player movement</p>	<p>No players from the 1st team squad would be permitted to move to the colt team out with transfer windows.</p> <p>Colt team players would be permitted to play for the 1st team in a competitive fixture on up to 4 separate occasions in any registration period. 'Play' in this context would mean appear on the pitch – being listed as an unused substitute would not count towards the quota. If a colt team player made 4 such appearances for the 1st team, he would be unable to feature again for the colt team until the opening of the next registration period.¹</p>

	<p>SPFL loan rules would apply as normal. It is noted that Emergency Temporary Transfers will no longer be available from season 18/19.</p>
3. Staff	<p>A club applying to be involved in the pilot would need to demonstrate that it has the following staff (full time unless otherwise noted) available at the same time the 1st team would be playing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Manager / Coach – A licence ii) Assistant Coach – A Licence iii) Sport Scientist – MSc in Sports Related Field iv) Physio – Chartered v) GK – UEFA GK Licence (can be part-time) vi) Analyst (can be part-time) vii) Doctor (can be part-time) <p>The posts of manager and assistant manager could be filled by an over age player provided that they have an A licence.</p>
4. Venue	<p>Two options to be presented:</p> <p>Option 1 - the colt teams play all their games away from home with the exception of matches against each other to generate additional finance for League Two clubs.</p> <p>Option 2 – the colt teams play all home games at a designated venue which would be required to meet SPFL League 2 entry level requirements.</p>
5. League structure	<p>4 options to be presented to accommodate a 12 team division in League 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 games with clubs playing each other on three occasions (likely preferred option)² • 38 games with a Premiership style split after 33 games • 22 games with clubs playing each other twice (unlikely to be enough games)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 games with clubs playing each other four times (likely to be too many games) <p>33 game benefit is 1 or 2 additional home games for League 2 Teams and a minimum of 4 less away matches. Both providing financial benefit.</p>
6. Financial benefits to L1 and L2 clubs	<p>The colt teams will not receive any payments through the 'ladder'.</p> <p>The colt teams involved in the pilot project will guarantee the purchase of a minimum of 250 tickets for each of its away fixtures at £10 per ticket. This will be a minimum guarantee and additional income would be expected through hospitality / catering etc.</p>
7. Promotion / relegation	<p>Colt teams will not be allowed to be promoted or relegated during the pilot.</p> <p>Should a colt team finish in the promotion, play off or relegation places they will not be eligible and the place will go to the next placed League 2 team.</p>
8. Interaction with Development / Reserve league	<p>A colt team may decide to also enter a team in the SPFL Reserve / Development League but it is not mandatory.</p>
9. Start date	<p>Pilot to commence in season 18/19 for a period of two seasons.</p>

Next steps

- Craig Mulholland (Rangers) and Chris McCart (Celtic) to meet with League Two clubs and feedback to SPFL