# The end of season email template

At the end of each season, the work starts on sorting out the teams for next season. It usually needs a lengthy email from the AGC to parents to explain how things will work. If they know what is coming, then they will have less reason to complain!

Here’s an example used by Andy Grindrod, when he was AGC for the U13s (massive input once again from Peter Drury!) It will give you some worthwhile insight into how we sort our squad selection, and how an AGC needs to get the message across to all parents before squad selection commences.

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Dear All

 As another season draws to a close, time has come to prepare ourselves for next season in the U14’s (unbelievable that the boys are now double the age from when we started!)

 PLEASE READ (and respond to) the RED paragraphs…...however reading the rest of this message is optional 😊 Those of you familiar with this process will be aware that this e-mail tends to be lengthy, so to spare you the extended version -

 If you feel you have a full understanding of the Raiders pre-season selection/preparation process and you're happy to trust me and the managers to oversee it as diligently and honestly as we can manage, please respond as soon as you reasonably can to let me know whether your son will, or will not be, continuing with Raiders next season.

 **Please reply to me directly by Monday May 4th.**

 ·         EITHER - "My son" would like to continue with Raiders next season.

·         OR - "Thank-you. My son has decided to retire from Raiders"

·         **For current training-members or on the waiting list**  please indicate whether you would like to (a) continue as a training member, (b) apply to become a full playing member if a vacancy becomes available or (c) retire

 This gives you four weeks from now to discuss with your son and come up with a definite answer- but the sooner, the better please.

 NB Please allow me respectfully to warn that I will be enforcing that deadline strictly. Lack of clarity/certainty up to "selection day" last year made an already fraught process still more complex. If I haven't heard from you by **4 May**, you will lose the status of a current member...and join the back of the waiting-list for ongoing membership.

 Once we have a full picture of how many (and who) want to continue and the level of outside interest, we aim to run some friendly and trial games...leading to a management selection meeting, currently pencilled in for Monday, June 8th.

 If you are happy that is enough information,  I look forward to your response!

 However for those who want more detail please read on……

 **The Management set-up, time for change or remain static?**

 I have no more right than anyone else to oversee the running of our age-group (and most pertinently , the selection process). I am happy to volunteer myself for another year in a job - but although I have been doing it for 7 years I hope you think I have gained experience, rather than the old adage “familiarity breeds contempt” !

 However if you believe it needs livening up, if you have misgivings about the way I do things, or even if you just fancy a turn I would completely understand and hand it over.

I would also be more than happy to provide any support you require!

 Therefore PLEASE SPEAK UP is you think it is time for a change.

 The same principle applies to all 4 team managers. I have yet to ask Matt, Pete , Phil and Damian whether they wish to continue as a Manager (and those that support/assistance them with admin and on match days … Chris, Ross, Matt D., Lynsey, Steve, Danny and anyone else I have missed), however I cannot thank them all enough running the sides last season. I hope you all agree that all those involved put in an immense amount of unselfish, unpaid effort for the benefit of our sons.

 However, if you have any misgivings about any of them, please feel free to register those. Equally, if you fancy a crack at management yourself, please do step forward !!

 **NB It is always our policy to select the boys first**...and appoint the managers afterwards. In other words and for the avoidance of doubt , the managers' sons are not pre-selected to suit our purposes. If their selection leaves us with a management problem, so be it. But the fair selection of the boys is always paramount.

 **I stress that although we all enjoy it, we only do it if you want us to! If we don't have your mandate or trust, you must let us know now.**

 **MUCH more importantly...the boys. Do they want to play on?**

 Now the people that really matter - the boys.

They're a great age group...and a credit to our club. It would be great if I had 60+ replies  all indicating a desire to remain or sign-up for Raiders!

 However, the reality is that may not be the case, which is quite understandable.

 All I ask for is an honest, straight (and relatively prompt) response. I appreciate that you might need time to discuss your son's ongoing commitment (which is why the deadline is four weeks away)...but please understand this absolutely fundamental feature of the process: **once you register your son's interest for next season, he is guaranteed playing membership of the club. He is then subject to selection for his team. You can NOT apply to play in a particular team.**

 It is , admittedly, impossible for me to enforce this; however, it would be considered very poor form for a boy to register his interest in playing next season...and then to withdraw after selection.

 **If you're thinking of calling it a day...**

 Whilst , like many Raiders die-hards I live and breathe the club, I do understand that there are plenty of (better-adjusted) people who do not.

Teenage boys are generally broadening their horizons, which may include other pursuits.

 We want them all to carry on playing, but absolutely no offence will be taken if you or they decide it is time to spend Sunday mornings differently.

 **If your son wants to retire gracefully...please let him do so without fear of embarrassment or upset. Hopefully he will leave with many happy memories, and if he then in the future has another change of mind, he will be welcomed back!**

 **If you're planning to carry on...**

 Excellent news!

 Please reply as soon as possible...and you're in (although training/new members applying for full membership will have to wait on vacancies to be confirmed)

 Whilst we understand (of course) that there is life outside of football, we only expect that those who re-join will want to commit themselves to being available for the vast majority of Sunday mornings during the season (and, as far as possible, to training sessions as well).

If you can't make that commitment...please think again!

 **The Selection Process**

 Here's how it works:

 Once we know how many current members are returning, we are then able to establish whether any (or all) of our training and new members have space to join. Thereafter , if applicable , we can open up membership to a waiting-list...and even beyond.

 The first part of the process is a "numbers game"...which is why it is so important to know (before the deadline) who is "in" and who is "out". There are people waiting on your decision...and it is unfair to string them along.

 Given the number of applicants, we (the managers and I) try to decide how best to split the boys between the four squads. There are several factors to be considered here...and opinions vary on the optimum number...but, on the whole, an 11-a-side squad will vary in size between about 14 (which would be perilously "thin") and 19 or 20 (which may lead to too many rest weeks etc). Generally, it'll be 15, 16, 17 per team which means we will have space for 60 - 68 boys

 My aim as Age Group Coordinator is to ensure that, as a Community Club, we are offering football to as many boys (within our age-range) as we can possibly accommodate. The managers whilst sympathising with that ambition are right to balance the discussion with an eye on the shape, size and requirements of their particular teams. Hopefully, we reach a satisfactory all-round outcome.

 After that it is the job of the management to select each of the boys for the team which is most likely to offer him enjoyment, fulfilment and fun on a Sunday morning. This - you hardly need me to say - is an horrendously inexact science...especially when applied to a disparate group of adolescent lads, with vastly differing (and frequently changing) levels of ambition, drive and footballing ability...and, indeed, with very different notions of how football should best be enjoyed!

 So...the simplest way of doing it is to play it straight - i.e. to try and reach a selectorial consensus based on what we know about each boy as a footballer! Frankly, it is pretty presumptuous for a group of well-meaning volunteers to attempt to make even these footballing judgements about your son...but that is the limit of our presumptuousness. Please be certain that we are not making a call on the character, status, popularity, intelligence or social standing of your son. We are merely trying to enable him to play football at the most appropriate level.

 It always sounds like politically-correct nonsense when I write this....but I mean this with genuine feeling.

It is NOT better to be in the REDS than the BLUES; it is NOT better to be in the BLUES than the GREENS and so on. It is ONLY best to be in the team where you are happiest to compete, challenge yourself and enjoy your game! Any boy (or parent) who considers their Raiders team to be, in any sense, a reflection of their "social status" needs to take a reality check.

As an example, would you like your Red player son to be judged as a character on whether he was in the bottom Maths set at school? I thought not.

Likewise, do you believe that if your White player son had basic grammar and spelling issues , he would thrive if he were thrust into the top English set? No, me neither.

I know this is an extreme analogy but you get the picture….

 Making comparisons between the current boys (particularly between different teams) is a tough thing to do. You might argue (with justification) that the REDS' historical strengths renders them "untouchable"...but - even towards the end of a largely difficult campaign - there are, perhaps, BLUES who - given a kinder roll of previous selectorial dice - could comfortably have made a similar contribution at a higher level. Should they not be given a chance?

You might argue (with justification) that there are players  long overdue a chance at a higher level...yet direct comparisons with higher teams (who've been playing in a different leagues at different levels) are dangerous. Having said that, who are we to say that it would be wrong for us again to take a chance on promoting players a couple of levels?

 These, of course, are just random thoughts -  don't take them too seriously. But they underline the difficulties we have. These difficulties are exacerbated if and when we have an influx of new members, particularly  as last season when some of those new members are clearly not going to join us at regular "entry" level.

 Of course, we can try to make more "real" comparisons by holding trials. They can be very helpful in certain circumstances. But, we do need to be wary even of reading too much into these. These one-off occasions (particularly involving boys who've just spent a day at school together and are "fired up" to beat each other) can produce performances which are out of keeping with the norm. They can help to "inform" a decision...but they can rarely be definitive.

 So ultimately I'm afraid you simply have to trust the managers (having talked themselves senseless over the various issues, conducted trials, conferred endlessly with each other over each other's players and, most importantly ,having spent a season overseeing all the action) to get together for the selection meeting (on June 8th) and pick the teams with as much honesty, diligence and sensitivity as they can muster.

 **The Selection Meeting (8/6/2015)**

 The selection meeting down the years has lasted for anything between 1 hour and 3 hours. It is chaired by me and attended by the managers PLUS one invited "neutral" parent, plus another AGC (who have no "say" but whose job is simply to observe and witness that we carry out the process fairly, decently and respectfully) plus a member of the Coaching team.

 My role is essentially to facilitate and arbitrate as the discussions take place. It would be silly of me to pretend that, whilst, of course, I have an "impression" and an opinion at the margins - I should have anything like a major say on the talents or potential of all the boys. I simply haven't seen any of them play enough. This, I promise, is not a case of "passing the buck" (indeed, I am very happy to shoulder responsibility for all the joint decisions we take). It is just to reassure you that your son's footballing future is principally defined by the man who has been with him through the season - his manager. The managers, rightly , do most of the key talking. I am there to make sure they play by the rules and the ethos of our club and age-group.

 **The "Show"**

 If all goes according to plan, I will send out an e-mail sometime within that week with next season's teams. If there are any particularly "sensitive" selections (up or down!), your manager or I will do our best to speak with you in advance. For the great majority of you, I daresay the news will come as no great surprise or no big deal.

 **In the moment of disappointment...**

 Sadly, it is an inevitable part of any selection process that there will be disappointment. As indicated above, we (the managers and I) do our best to identify the sensitive situations...and to explain, face to face if necessary. Every year, there are 4 or 5 disappointed reactions and all of those are utterly understandable.

Generally those parents who have fed back in the moment of disappointment, and taken the trouble to discuss and understand the issues involved have done so amicably, pleasantly and rationally. This is appreciated.

 I want to reiterate that throughout the whole process (from NOW...right through to the end of the season...through the trials and friendlies...and through selection) I am absolutely available to talk to. Clearly, I can't be discussing other peoples' children with you (as you would expect me to be discrete about your own child). However, I keep no secrets about the process...the potential for change...new members...the broad issues. It is NOT a secret, cliquey dictatorship. It is , as far as possible , an absolutely open process.

 If after selection you disagree with an outcome it is absolutely your right to say so. I am more than happy to discuss it with you as frankly as you feel necessary!

 Over the years (and even last season) we haven’t got them all right. But I can say that every decision has been thought through and discussed, and every boy (and his family) is given equal consideration.

 Thanks for reading through this ,and my thanks to fellow AGC Peter Drury for much of the material outlining the process…….

Enjoy your Easter break, and for those that still have matches to play, enjoy the rest of the season!

 Regards

Andy Grindrod
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Vice Chairman, U13 Age Group Coordinator