



NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES

Structure of the NPL & State League

Decision Summary

Football West recently prepared a discussion paper which raised some of the key issues associated with the future of the NPL. This paper was circulated among NPL clubs, State League clubs and the State League Standing Committee and was published on the Football West website. Following an extensive consultation process, which include the conduct of a club survey by the State League Standing Committee, the Board of Directors of Football West approved the following structural attributes of both the NPL and State League competitions.

1. Number of Clubs in Each Competition

Each division of the NPL and each division of the State League will contain 12 teams (that is, no change to the current structure).

2. Promotion and Relegation between the NPL and State League One

A promotion and relegation arrangement will be introduced between State League One and the NPL in 2015. This means that at the end of 2015, the lowest ranked club in the NPL will be relegated from the NPL to State League One and the highest ranked club in State League One will be promoted from State League One to the NPL. Promotion to the NPL is dependent on the highest ranked club in State League One meeting the NPL Eligibility Criteria and it is important to note that for a club to be promoted, these Eligibility Criteria must be satisfied by the date of the last match of the State League One season.

Should the highest ranked club of State League One not meet the NPL Eligibility Criteria, promotion will be offered to the second highest ranked club of State League One provided that club accrues no more than five (5) fewer competition points than the club that finished above it, and that the second-placed club meets the NPL Eligibility Criteria. For the avoidance of doubt, should the second-placed club finish with a competition points tally of six (6) or more behind the competition winners, then no club will be promoted and in turn no club will be relegated.

The Board of Directors has NOT approved the implementation of a play-off tie between the second lowest ranked club in the NPL and the second highest ranked club in State League One. The main reasons for this are:

- a) it will affect and disrupt too many junior NPL players causing considerable movement of those affected and disrupted players between NPL and non-NPL clubs thus destabilising the competition and defeating many of the aims of the NPL. The relegation of each NPL club affects about 100 players;
- b) it will compromise the integrity of the aims of the NPL by diluting standards to an unacceptable level by introducing two new clubs into the competition; and
- c) while a club's league position is the result of a sustained period of performance (or non-performance) over 22 home and away matches, a 'sudden death' play-off disregards this and it seems to be counter-intuitive to have the following season's placement of two clubs dependent on a single two-legged tie.

3. Coupling of Teams in the NPL

The Board of Directors has deferred a decision on this matter and has instructed Football West staff to do further work in relation to the issue of "coupling". This will be undertaken in the coming weeks in consultation with all relevant parties including FFA and other Member Federations. It is important to note that while the issue of promotion and relegation has been agreed to by the Football West Board, the mechanics and consequences are, to a certain extent, dependent on the resolution of the issue of this "coupling" investigation and deliberation.

4. NPL-WA Finals Series

The Football West Board has reserved judgment on the status of the NPL-WA Finals Series and instructed the Football West staff to conduct further investigations in consultation with NPL clubs and other Member Federations. These investigations will be undertaken in the coming weeks.

5. Promotion and Relegation between State League One and State League Two

The existing promotion and relegation arrangement will be maintained between State League One and State League Two whereby the lowest ranked club in State League One is relegated from State League One to State League Two and the highest ranked club in State League Two is promoted from State League Two to State League One.

The Board of Directors has NOT approved the implementation of a play-off tie between the second lowest ranked club in State League One and the second highest ranked club in State League Two. The main reasons for this are:

- a) it will compromise the integrity of the State League by diluting standards to an unacceptable level by introducing two new clubs into the competition;
- b) while a club's league position is the result of a sustained period of performance (or non-performance) over 22 home and away matches, a 'sudden death' play-off disregards this and it seems to be counter-intuitive to have the following season's placement of two clubs dependent on a single two-legged tie; and
- c) Football West believes it is important to maintain consistency between promotion and relegation models.

6. State League One Eligibility Criteria (for clubs wishing to be promoted to the NPL)

The Football West Board has not approved the establishment of a separate set of eligibility criteria for State League One clubs that wish to be promoted to the NPL. Instead, the Board of Directors has acted to minimise the risk to the integrity of the NPL by requiring that the highest ranked club satisfies ALL NPL eligibility criteria on or before the last fixture date of the State League One season.

7. Night Series

The traditional pre-season Night Series competition will, from 2015 onwards, be conducted as two separate competitions consisting of one competition for NPL clubs and one competition for State League Clubs.

Perth Glory will not compete in the NPL Night Series due to its National Youth League commitments and so the highest ranked club in State League One in the previous season will be invited to compete in the NPL Night Series. If that club accepts the invitation, the club that wins the Sunday Premier Division title in the previous season will be invited to compete in the State League Night Series to replace the highest ranked club of State League One.

8. The FFA Cup and the State Cup Final

What has previously been known as the State (Cool Ridge) Cup will act as the FFA Cup WA Preliminary Rounds from 2015. However, there will still be a State Cup Final to bring that series of matches to a logical conclusion in WA.

There will also continue to be an Under 18s and Under 20s/Reserves State Cup competition, the logistics of which will be established in the coming weeks and months.