



LARKHALL ATHLETIC FC



Frequently asked questions

Information correct as at: 21 June 2009

TEAMS & JOINING LARKHALL ATHLETIC YOUTH

Q: For what ages do you have teams?

A: For season 09-10, we plan to run boys' or mixed teams at U8, U9, U10 and U11; boys' teams at U12, U13, U14, U15, U16 and U17; and girls' teams at U12, U14 and U16

Q: Do you have to be "good" to join?

A: No (and in any case, it can be difficult to agree what "good" means!). What's more important for us than a player's current level of ability or potential is that they are very keen to play and want to learn and become better players. That way, we can help them achieve their potential at whatever level that may be. It is also very important to us that players (and their parents/carers) are committed to abide by our club codes of conduct.

So that we can cater for experienced players and less experienced or currently less developed players, whenever we can we try to run two teams at each age group.

Q: Do you have "trials"? And how do decide which team to place a player in?

A: The club does not hold trials in order to assess whether players are "good enough" to join the club. Provided we have space in our squads (see below), we are always pleased to welcome new players to our club whatever their current level of ability. For Year Groups in which we have more than one team, we do, though, sometimes hold training sessions in which matches are held to help coaches assess into which team it will best to place players. These training sessions have sometimes been perceived as "trials" by some parents/carers, but we don't feel this is very helpful or appropriate. "Trial" is a very emotive word, which implies that a player can "pass" or "fail" and so be accepted or rejected by a club. While this is of course what happens at some clubs including professional clubs, it is not the case at Larkhall Athletic Youth. Provided we have room, all players who wish to play are welcomed and not turned away.

Individually, players are placed in teams that will help them to enjoy their football and to develop as much as possible. While it is important that coaches always seek to "stretch" players and challenge them to improve, experience shows that asking less experienced or currently less able players to play at a level

significantly above that of their current skills (i.e. in the stronger of two teams) is often counter productive and not in the best interests of the player concerned. This is for several reasons. For example, the currently less able player will tend to get a less of the ball and so have less opportunity to develop his or her skills; as a consequence, the player's confidence, enjoyment of football and performance will likely suffer. For these reasons, the club believes that it is better for each child's development and enjoyment, if he or she is placed in a squad with other children of broadly similar current ability.

Q: Can girls play?

A: Absolutely! Larkhall Athletic is very committed to developing female football. For season 09-10, we will have all-girl teams at U12, U14 and U16 age levels. The club also has a Ladies team, for which girls aged 16 and over are eligible to train and play with. For season 09-10 we are very keen to recruit lots more girls and women to play for us.

And, once again, it doesn't matter if girls are inexperienced footballers; they are welcome to come along to two or three training sessions to see if they enjoy it.

Q: Do girls and boys play in the same teams?

A: Yes, they can do sometimes. According to current Football Association rules (which have been challenged but not yet changed), girls and boys can play in the same team at ages up to and including U11. At U12 and above, teams have to be single sex. The general approach at Larkhall towards enabling girls to play football is to form all-girl teams at U11 and below if and when there are enough girls of the relevant age wanting to play. If, however, there are too few girls of the relevant age to form an all-girl team, we would simply incorporate them into a mixed team.

Q: How many players are needed for a team?

A: This varies according to age and whether the match concerned is a League match or part of a tournament. In League matches, U8 matches are 5 a side; U9s and U10s play 7 a side; and U11s and older play 11 a side (though, girls' Leagues often have 7 a side divisions as well as 11 a side divisions for U11s and above). In addition, for all age groups, teams are also allowed to make a number of substitutions (typically up to 3 or 5). Most tournaments are 5 or 6 a side regardless of age.

So that we keep numbers to a manageable size and enable all players who are available for a match to play in it, we try to keep squad sizes reasonably small. Typically, the squad size for U8s to U10s would be 10-12 players, while for older teams; we would have squads of around 15-17.

Q: How is it decided where particular children play in a team?

A: We do try to take into account players' wishes but, ultimately, decisions about where players play has to be the coach's decision (or otherwise there would be chaos, with most children playing in one part of the pitch!). When deciding where children play, coaches need to be mindful of the team's best interests as well each player's attributes and will seek to position players where they think they play well or come to play well. We also try to give children opportunities to try playing in some different positions when possible.

Q: How can I join Larkhall Athletic?

A: Contact one of our coaches for the relevant age group and then complete the relevant membership application form for boys/mixed teams or girls teams.

MATCHES

Q: When do you play your matches?

A: This depends on which league the relevant team is in. Some of our teams play in the Mid Wilts League, which stipulates the following times and days for matches:

- U8: Saturday or Sunday, as agreed between clubs for each game
- U9: Saturday (time to be agreed between clubs for each game)
- U10: Sunday (time to be agreed between clubs for each game)
- U11: Saturday, kick-off 10.45am
- U12: Sunday, kick-off 10.45am
- U13: Sunday, kick-off 2.00pm
- U14: Sunday, kick-off 2.00pm
- U15: Sunday, kick-off 2.00pm
- U16: Sunday, kick-off 2.00pm
- U17: Sunday, kick-off 2.00pm

We also have teams on the Midsomer Norton League, in which the games for all age groups take place on a Sunday afternoon. Some of our girls' teams play in the Wiltshire Women and Girls' League, which allows teams to determine which day and time best suits them for their home games. As teams are able to do this, each team can choose Saturday or Sunday am or pm. We also sometimes have teams in the Somerset Girls League, where matches are played on a Sunday.

Q: Where do you play your matches?

A: This varies from season to season, but we use several venues, including: Kingswood School, The Royal High School, Monkton Combe School and Lansdown Playing Fields

Q: How many matches a season do teams play?

A: This differs between age groups, with the younger teams generally playing rather fewer games. The number of games a team plays partly depends on the size of the division a team finds itself in and on how far the team progresses in any relevant cup competitions. Typically, younger teams might play 10-12 matches, fortnightly for the U8s; while older teams might play closer to 20 and usually play weekly

Q: How long do matches last?

A: This depends on the age of the teams:

U8: 20 mins each way
U9: 20 mins each way
U10: 25 mins each way
U11: 30 mins each way
U12: 35 mins each way
U13: 35 mins each way
U14: 35 mins each way
U15: 40 mins each way
U16: 40 mins each way
U17: 45 mins each way

Q: Does the club arrange transport to and from matches?

A: No - responsibility for arranging transport to and from matches (and to and from training) lies with parents/carers.

Q: Is it only the “best” players who get a game? How do you get selected to play?

A: No – all players who are taken to a game are given the chance to play in the match. In many games, it is permissible to use rolling substitutes so that many or all children in the match can take a turn at being substitute. Coaches try, as far as possible (taking into account the particular situations in games) to give all players – including substitutes - a good length of time on the pitch. We also try to keep our squads reasonably small, so that if players are available for a match they can go to a match and play (i.e. according to League rules teams can only take so many substitutes to a match).

TRAINING

Q: Where and when do you train?

A: This differs according to the time of year. During the lighter nights (April to September – with a break for the summer holidays), all year groups train weekly

outside at Lansdown Playing Fields, normally on Wednesdays or Thursdays, from 6 or 6.30 to 7.30 or 8.00, depending on the age of the children. During the darker evenings, the different year groups train at different venues (including the astro pitches at Kingswood and St Marks Schools) on different evenings depending on venue availability.

Q: How long training sessions last?

A: Normally, subject to the weather (when outdoors) and venue availability, we like to have hour-long training sessions for the U8s and U9s, while the older age groups have an hour and a half

Q: What do training sessions involve?

A: It is important to try to keep training sessions interesting, so they will normally involve a variety of activities, which can include fitness and agility, individual skills, a wide range of training drills, and always the players' favourite – matches!!

Q: Who organises and takes training?

A: Normally, training sessions will be planned and taken by Larkhall Athletic coaches. Occasionally we welcome into the club tried and tested coaches from outside the club, in order to provide variety for the players and some fresh ideas for our coaches, so our coaches keep learning too.

COST

Q: How much does it cost to join Larkhall Athletic and what does this cover?

A: The annual subscription is £90 [*subject to confirmation for season 09-10*], which covers the cost of all training sessions and matches (as the club has to pay to hire training venues and pitches). This works out around £2 per training session/match, which we feel is good value.

Q: What does the membership subscription not cover?

A: The subscription does not cover the cost of kit (between £20 and £30 depending on the player's size); boots; the cost of (optional) summer tournaments (usually £3 or £4 per player per tournament) or the cost of (optional) social activities like trips to professional matches. The club also does not pay the cost of any fines that players incur – which are the parents'/carers' responsibility to pay.

Q: Does the club offer any financial support to people on low incomes?

A: Yes, If parents/carers can show proof that they are in receipt of one or more of: Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance (either income or contribution based) or Free School Meals, the Club will consider contributing towards the cost of the relevant child's membership subscription and kit. If you wish to apply to the club for such financial assistance, please contact Tony Day - in confidence - who will explain the relevant club procedures.

Q: When is the subscription payable?

A: £30 deposit is required when applying for membership, with the £60 balance payable by the end of August