

Cumann Pheadair Naofa

U/7 Football 2020 (current years P1 to P4)



Kieran Grant	- Manager
Colm Rice	- Manager
Stephen Robinson	- Manager
Sean Doherty	- Coach
Mark Toal	- Coach
Declan Mc Grath	- Coach
James Keenan	- Coach
Paul Rafferty	- Coach
Ruari McCartney	- Coach
Niall McShane	- Coach
Paul Stokes	- Coach
Gavin Poland	- Coach
Colin McGivern	- Coach
Nigel O Rourke	- Coach

This year with changes to under age structure it meant that we had 1 additional year group to coach (Nursery, P1, P2 & P3). For this reason the group was effectively split in 2 with Stephen Robinson heading up the younger group whilst I headed up P2 & P3 group. Please see Stephen's report below for his group.

The highest attendance for the season in total was 75 kids with a weekly average of 60+ kids. Split by year this was as follows: Nursery-21, P1-10, P2-18, P3-14. 34 girls attended training which is the highest every for this age group (Nursery-10, P1-5, P2-11, P3-8). Due to these numbers and to provide a decent level of coaching a total of 14 coaches helped out over the season

Our season started on the 23rd February 2020 in 2 gyms of St. Mark's. We had three weeks of indoor training before the lock commenced on 13th March 2020.

This was the fifth year we had the outdoor sessions start immediately after the indoor training and it worked well. Hopefully the availability of the gym will continue in the future.

Training resumed on St Marks pitch on Sunday 19th July 2020 for P1-P3s with nursery group included the following week.

P2-P3

This group had on average 6 coaches. After lockdown when training resumed, the decision was taken to train the p3s twice a week due to time lost. The time slot for the mid-week session was 6PM -7PM in St Marks. This extra session helped increase skills level. I think the coaches would have liked to have had higher skills levels by the end of the season but the opportunity to coach was obviously curtailed mid-season. A twice weekly session for the oldest year (or possibly oldest two years) in this group will be a big benefit going forward if it can be managed.

The county board arranged scheduled friendlies after lockdown. Our group managed to play against Newry Shamrocks away and Rostrevor and Saval at home. We were able to field 3 teams against Newry Shamrocks and 4 teams against Saval and Rostrevor. The teams did very well in all matches
Other matches were organised against Mayobridge and Burren but these had to be cancelled at short notice due to self-isolating guidelines.

We were unable to run our mini tournament that has been running for the last 5 years but hopefully we can run something next year.

At the time of writing this report (18-10-2020), we had intended to continue training with current P3s and P4s as long as weather permitted however with training now cancelled for the next 4 weeks it may prove difficult to get on to the pitch in mid-November.

I would like to thank the junior football committee for their assistance throughout the year. In particular thanks to Paul McKibben for sourcing some much needed new footballs and for guiding us through the return to play guidelines. Thanks to Daniel Bird for organising the gym and pitches and for contacting the care takers at St marks to get the gates opened when required! A special thanks to Colm Rice for ensuring that everyone was signed in and sanitised at the start and end of each training session.

I would like to thank all coaches who were a great help throughout the year as it would be impossible to do anything worthwhile without their help. A special thanks to Stephen Robinson for taking on the mantle of looking after the younger group (nursery & P1s) very successfully. Stephen also brought in additional coaches to the group to ensure that the kids were coached effectively. Stephen also spent a lot of time at the start of the year compiling a coaches training manual for all years up to under 11s. This manual is invaluable for coaches and will hopefully continue to be so for years to come as it provides a road map of how players should be progressing at various skills from ages 4 to 11.

I would ask that myself and coaches are kept informed of any coaching sessions available over winter (even via zoom!) as this is very beneficial for organising training sessions.

All the coaches have expressed an interest in carrying on next year. Myself, James Keenan and Ruari McCartney are willing to move up to under 9s with assistance from some of the other coaches when they can. The remainder of the coaches will continue to coach the U7s.

In my opinion now that the year structure has have changed, I think the U7s should be P1 to P3 only. Three years is broad range and I think the kids will get more benefit if the coaching staff are allocated across 3 years instead of 4 years. It might be appropriate to seek further opinions from people like Colm Rice, Stephen Robinson and Sean Doherty on this matter.

Finally, I would conclude by saying that I'm sure all the coaches would agree that it was privilege to coach such a great bunch of kids who displayed a high level of enthusiasm, as well as good manners, throughout the year.

Le Mise
Kieran



Nursery / P1

As Kieran mentioned we started off the year with the nursery group and P1's in the upper gym in St. Marks. At this point it was Colm Rice, Sean Doherty and myself who were looking after more than 30 4 and 5 years olds so firstly a big thank you to Declan McGrath and Christy McShane for stepping in and helping us out over those first few weeks to get things settled down. It was obvious at this point that we needed more coaches for the number of kids that came along!

As we came out of lockdown and moved outside, we had 4 new coaches join the group – Colin McGivern, Gavin Poland, Paul Stokes and Niall McShane. Huge credit to these for stepping in, as without them it would have been a big struggle to provide any sort of coaching or fun games to the kids. Ideally at this age group we need a coach for every 5 children and the 4 coaches allowed us to reach this target and ensured when a coach wasn't available we still had enough coverage to provide effective training. Also, a big thank you for the enthusiasm the coaches showed for getting involved in the sessions – I'm not sure the picture of coaching is getting down and pretending to be a zebra walking around the field (!) but they all jumped in whole-heartedly. Children at this age just love the coaches being involved in the games and participating in what they are doing and all the coaches were great at doing that so thanks to all. I do feel it was this engagement that ensured that the kids enjoyed coming to training each week and always left with a smile on their faces.

The goal of the training at this age was solely enjoyment and trying to ensure that the kids come back each week. Everything we looked to do was to be fun and if something looked like it wasn't working we changed very quickly. Children at this age are quick to let you know too if they aren't enjoying something as their attention wavers and they start wandering all over the pitch! While having fun, we tried then to improve the basics of the nursery group with the main focus being on kicking the ball from the ground and from the hand and the fundamentals of movements (running, jumping, hopping, dodging, balance). These are the basic skills that will stand to children as they progress throughout their playing career and next year the goal will be similar – improve the kicking of all children as when they start to play games they will enjoy it a lot more if they can kick the ball effectively, more than any other skill. For the P1s Sean Doherty did a great job leading the progression of their skills and the kids respond very well to Sean. It was noticeable at the end of the year that the kids were developing well and similar to Kieran's sentiments above it was a shame that we lost so much time coaching this year. Thanks to Sean for the great job he did all year.

Equipment wise the main requirement I would see at this age group is just cones and balls. The children at this age do not queue or wait their turn for a go, if we have them queuing they will lose interest and we will lose their attention for the game we are attempting to do. For future coaches at this age I'd also say keep instructions short and to a minimum – more than 20 seconds and attention is gone! This is also why it's important that we have plenty of balls – ideally one per child. They will not be performing lots of skills but we want them to “own a ball” during a session. So

every time they are running, they are doing so carrying a ball etc. The more time they have possession of a ball, the more they will improve and the more engaged in the training they will be. Ultimately though they are 4 and 5, it's all about fun and making sure they return.

I'd like to echo Kieran's thoughts above and thank the football committee, Daniel Bird, Paul McKibben and the St. Marks caretakers for all the help during the year. Special thanks to Colm Rice for his role as the Covid Supervisor during our return to play. It was a thankless task at times but done with no fuss. Thanks to all the coaches and most importantly thank you to all the kids for their good behaviour and good humour. Not one week went by without us having a good laugh and enjoying ourselves coaching the kids. They were a great bunch and I look forward to being involved again next year.

Finally, thanks to Kieran Grant himself for all his work during the year. It's obvious that he cares very much about the group of kids and this always showed in his attitude each week. It was a huge amount of work for Kieran this year managing 4 years but always very enjoyable so a big thanks to Kieran and best of luck with the U9's next year !

For next year, it's important that if/when we start coaching the new bunch of nursery children that we bring on board new coaches too from the parents of the nursery group. As mentioned previously, nursery requires a coach for about every 5 children to be effective so it's important that we get new coaches into the club as we get new kids joining training. We also need to find ways to encourage female coaches to join the group – this year we had a great turnout of girls within the nursery group and we want to make sure that we cater for this and that the kids have female role models to look up to, to ensure they keep playing.

As anyone who was in St. Marks on a Sunday morning will have heard – there's only one way to finish anything to do with the nursery/P1 group:

Who are we??

SUPERBLUEEEEEESSSSSS