

Scottish Touch Association

Selection policy for the national squad



Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe clearly to players, selectors, coaches and other interested parties the selection policy and process for the Scotland National Squad for the 2009/10 season onwards. It is effective from September 2009.

This document builds on previous policies produced for past Scotland squads. As a matter of course, this policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

This document should be read in conjunction with *The 2009/10 Scotland National Squad Selection Process*, which sets out key dates and venues, as well as details of what will happen at each of those landmark points. The other key document is *The Scotland National Touch Squad Player Agreement and Code of Conduct*, which details the behaviours and actions required of national squad players and the squad's discipline system, including how that impacts on selection and continued participation in the squad.

National Squad Selection Panel:

National selection chair

National selection vice-chair

Regional coaching coordinator (appointed by chair and vice-chair)

Regional coaching coordinator (appointed by chair and vice-chair)

National team coach (appointed by chair and vice-chair)

NMSC chair (ex officio member)

National squad coaching director (ex officio member)

If you have any comments or questions about any aspect of selection, please contact: national.selection@scottishtouch.org.uk

Objectives

This policy is based on the following objectives for the national squad:

To select players to form teams to achieve the best possible results at designated events and tournaments in the forthcoming season.

To use an open and fair selection process that gives players a fair chance to challenge for international selection.

To employ a selection process that gives:

a: players a fair chance to address areas of their development that could affect their final selection;

b: coaches and administrators an opportunity to develop as wide a talent pool as possible of athletes with the appropriate skills and knowledge.

Eligibility

At the time of drafting this policy, eligibility rules were under negotiation with FIT to try to align the criteria for European and World competitions and other international tournaments.

Until further notice, the eligibility used will be the standard European Championships criteria, as follows.

To be eligible to represent Scotland, a player must:

- be a British citizen OR
- have been born in Scotland OR
- have at least one parent or grandparent who was born in Scotland.

AND

It is a further condition that the player must be domicile and resident in Scotland for two years prior to the start of the relevant European Touch Championships.

The STA is able to apply to FIT for an exemption for a player who does not meet these criteria, and will do this as it deems appropriate.

The decision to make an application for an exemption will be at the discretion of the National Squad Selection Panel. However, the decision whether to grant the exemption is at the discretion of FIT and outwith the control of the STA.

A player must not be ineligible to compete at the championships due to failure to comply with the FIT Anti-Doping Policy.

Selection Framework

Touch is a team sport, with teams made up of individuals. In this context, selection must cover both the individual and the team. Whilst an individual can do a great deal to develop their own skills, knowledge and fitness, ultimately that individual player has to be able to perform within a team.

The selection process aims to offer players the chance to develop themselves both as individual players and as team players. It aims to recognise individuals' skill levels, knowledge, fitness and other individual factors.

However, in selecting for a team sport, factors such as skill mix within a team, combinations, the balance of a team and the ability of players to play in more than one position, are also considered alongside individual factors.

Selection strategy stems from the national squad strategy, which is set jointly by the National Squad Management Committee and the National Squad Coaching Directors prior to the training cycle. This strategy determines matters including, but not limited to, which teams the STA sends to designated events and which divisions are prioritised.

Talent Identification

For the next training cycle and selection process, invitations to join the Scotland National Training Squad will go to all players who:

- represented Scotland during the current international season or
- were selected into the current Scotland Development Squad.

The National Squad Selection Panel may also invite players who have been identified by other means including, but not limited to, the current season's Scottish Touch Series (STS) and the current season's Scottish National Touch Championships (SNTC). The decision to invite a player into the national training squad is open to discussion with the NSMC, and analysis of and reasons for inviting a player who has not previously represented Scotland should be recorded in a written form that is accessible to all members of the selection panel.

Acceptance into the Scotland National Training Squad will depend on a player responding to the invitation, signing and agreeing to the terms of *The Scotland National Touch Squad Player Agreement and Code of Conduct*, and paying their training deposit.

Structure of national squad

The Scotland National Squad for the forthcoming season will typically be made up of a number of teams in different divisions, with each team structured as follows:
Team (eg: MO, WO) = number in final squad + number of shadows

The structure of the national squad is decided during the process of the NSMC and the National Squad Coaching Directors agreeing the national squad strategy.

The decision on the structure of the national squad is for the NSMC to make. However, the National Squad Coaching Directors give the NSMC a strong recommendation on the structure of the squad and which divisions are being prioritised (if any), and it is expected that the NSMC will look favourably upon and act on that recommendation.

If the NSMC chooses not to accept that recommendation, it must explain its decision in writing to the Ordinary Committee of the STA. The Ordinary Committee has the right of veto in the case of any impasse between the NSMC and NSCDs in this matter.

Selection Process

At the start of each season *The Scotland National Squad Selection Process* will detail the process, including all provisional dates and venues for the forthcoming season.

A high level outline of the process is as follows:

- Players join the training squad in October and are tested and assessed. Players are given feedback about their strengths and development needs, and receive guidance from coaches about how to address those needs.
- Testing and assessing will be repeated at regular intervals through the winter training programme. The feedback and suggested remedial action process is repeated during this time.
- Preliminary teams are selected in February. These teams form the basis for selection discussion from then until the end of the selection process in late March and are open to change throughout this time.
- Final selection is in late March.

This process is designed with the aims, stated above in 'Objectives', of giving players a fair chance to address areas of their development that could affect their final selection, and to develop as wide a talent pool as possible.

Selection will be based on a publicised set of criteria. These are detailed in the selection process document and cover areas such as individual touch skills, team skills, athletic performance and mental skills.

Selection for each final squad (eg: MO, WO) will be determined by a selection team for that squad, with each selection team having a team leader, and that selection team reports to the selection panel. For instance, there will be an MO selection team with an MO selection team leader, which reports to the wider selection panel.

Each selection team is responsible for drafting preliminary teams and giving strong guidance on the final selection of that squad, with the national selection panel making the final decision.

The selection panel will communicate the final team selections to players via a final squad announcement. This will be via email and on the STA website.

Prior to this announcement, the selection panel will contact and inform those players who:

- are not being selected
- are being invited as shadow players
- are being selected but it is thought should be contacted beforehand due to possible issues with their selection
- are being selected for the first time.

Selection dispute resolution process

If a player disputes the decision made regarding their selection, for whatever reason, they can ask for an explanation and for the decision to be reconsidered.

Such a request will be made in writing to the chair of the national selection panel within 14 days of the final squad being announced. In the first instance, the chair will ask the team leader of the relevant selection team to provide a written answer to the query or dispute, giving clear reasons for the decision. This must be provided within seven days.

This will be communicated onwards to the player in question, who may choose to accept the decision or to ask for the matter to be escalated to the chair for the chair to consider the decision and justification.

If the player chooses to appeal to the selection panel chair, they must do so in writing within seven days and provide clear reasons for why they continue to disagree with the decision and/or do not accept the reasons given by the team leader.

The selection chair will then make a final resolution on the matter. That decision will be final and further correspondence on the matter will not be acknowledged or acted upon, except in exceptional circumstances.

Post-selection issues

Discipline and player conduct

All players are expected to comply with the behaviours and actions outlined in *The Scotland National Touch Squad Player Agreement and Code of Conduct*. That document details these behaviours and actions, and the discipline system in place for failure to comply. Acceptance into both the training squad and final squad relies in part on having read and signed this agreement.

As detailed in the player agreement, disciplinary measures for failure to comply include a points system, suspension or expulsion from the squad. Any player who is expelled can appeal that decision and must do so in writing to the NSMC within 14 days of receiving written notification of their expulsion. The NSCDs, the player's team coach and the NSMC will review the decision and give the player a written final decision within 14 days of receiving the review request.

A suspension or expulsion from the squad for disciplinary reasons will be considered in any future possible selection to the national squad.

Appointment of team captains and vice-captains

The appointment of team captains and vice-captains is a matter that will be discussed during the selection process by the selection panel, as part of their deliberations over the teams. The final appointments are a matter for the team coaches of each team but they are expected to take into account the discussions had about this matter during the selection process. These appointments should be done by the squad's second training weekend together.

Movement between teams

Movement of players between different teams within the Scotland squads will be allowed at any time as a reaction to circumstances or for reasons of team balance and competitive advantage.

Any decision to move a player must be agreed by all parties concerned: the player, both team coaches, the NSCDs and the NSMC. This must be recorded in a note on the player's file, with all parties signing that written record.

Withdrawal from the squad

Players have the right to withdraw from the squad. If a player intends withdrawing from the squad, they should do so at the earliest possible opportunity so as to minimise disruption to their squad.

When withdrawing from the squad, the player must inform their coach, the NSCDs and the NSMC in writing, clearly stating the reasons for the withdrawal. The NSMC must reply to the player, confirming their withdrawal, within 14 days. This correspondence will be confidential.

If the reasons for the withdrawal are deemed to be private and sensitive and the player does not wish to detail this in writing, they can request to discuss this with their coach and for their coach to act as their advocate to the NSCDs and the NSMC. The player must indicate this choice of action in writing to the NSMC before the coach approaches the NSMC.

All withdrawals will be considered final, except in the case of injury or illness (more below in the 'Injuries and medical matters' section).

In some circumstances, withdrawal from the 2009/10 squad may be considered in any future possible selection to the national squad.

Shadow players

Players who miss out on selection to a final team may be invited to join a team as a shadow player. Such players will train with their team as cover for the potential loss of a selected player for whatever reason.

Shadow players will be told at the outset of training which positions they are covering and which players they are there to replace if required.

A shadow player will only be brought into the final side to replace the loss of a selected player and not in any other circumstances. This may happen at any point up until the registration of final teams at the event (usually the day before the tournament starts).

The decision to bring a shadow player into the side to replace the loss of a player is at the discretion of the team coach. It should be based on which positions and players the shadow player was told they would be covering, and the decision is open to question by the NSCDs and the NSMC.

A shadow player who is not brought into the final squad ahead of the tournament but decides to attend the event anyway will not be given the opportunity to play during the tournament.

Overseas travel and extended absence from training

A player who is selected into the national training squad who then intends travelling or being absent from training for an extended period of time must discuss this with the NSMC and NSCDs.

Such a player may keep their place in the squad but will be expected to meet a number of requirements. The player and the NSCDs will jointly decide on a number of agreements covering areas such as how the player will meet their training requirements (both S&C and skills), communication, regular updates on their training record and performance, testing, injury updates and management, and other issues that arise.

Injuries and medical matters

Players are expected to inform their coach of any injury or medical matter that could have a bearing on their ability to train or compete.

If a player has an injury or medical issue that prevents them from training, they will be classified as 'injured reserve' until this matter is resolved. A player can also request to withdraw from the squad due to injury.

In the case of a return to training from injury or illness, consent from the player's own physio or doctor may be enough for them to come back and to lose their 'injured reserve' classification. The player's team coach may request that this consent is provided in writing.

However, their coach or the NSCDs can request they undergo a fitness test, administered by the squad physios, and their return to active training may depend on passing the test

A player who has previously withdrawn from the squad due to injury and wishes to rejoin the squad must apply to the NSMC in writing. The NSMC, in conjunction with the player's team coach and the NSCD, will consider this request. If the request is granted, the player may be asked to undergo a fitness test, and their return to the squad may depend on passing the fitness test.

If a player has an injury or medical matter in the four weeks before the start of a tournament that puts their participation in doubt, that player must undergo a fitness test and pass that test in order to take their place in the team and compete at the tournament.

A player injured at the tournament will be assessed by the squad physios and their continued participation will be agreed between the physios, the player and the player's team coach. This assessment may involve a full fitness test but this is at the discretion of the physios.