NSW Touch Football Limited

Elite Referees Squad Program

June 2026
Version 1.0

1. PURPOSE AND INTENT

The NSW Touch Football Elite Refereeing Program exists to identify, develop, prepare and support referees who demonstrate the capability, commitment and performance behaviours required to progress through the NSW, national and international officiating pathway.

The program is designed as a structured high-performance development environment, not simply a selection mechanism. Its purpose is to build a deeper, better prepared and more resilient pool of elite referees who can consistently perform in high-pressure matches, contribute positively to the referee team, model professional standards, and support the ongoing growth of officiating across NSW Touch Football.

The program will align with Touch Football Australia's national referee standards and pathway expectations while ensuring NSWTF provides a clear, transparent and supportive framework for referee progression, performance monitoring, coaching, feedback and accountability.

The core objectives of the program are to:

- identify referees with the technical, physical, behavioural and leadership attributes required for higher-level officiating;
- provide targeted coaching, education, mentoring and performance feedback to accelerate referee development;
- prepare referees to perform consistently at NSWTF major events, national tournaments and representative environments;
- strengthen the pipeline of NSW referees progressing into National Referee Academy, National Referee Squad, National Seniors Referee Squad and international opportunities;
- develop referees who can operate effectively as part of a high-performance officiating team;
- promote professional standards in fitness, preparation, communication, decision-making, resilience and game management;
- support a positive, inclusive and accountable referee culture that values respect, integrity, continuous improvement and team-first behaviour;
- provide leadership and mentoring opportunities for experienced referees to support the next generation; and
- improve the quality, consistency and reputation of refereeing across NSW Touch Football.

NSWTF will seek to maximise the number of NSW referees progressing into national and international referee environments by building a transparent, high-quality and sustainable development pathway that prepares referees to meet or exceed national standards.

The program recognises that elite refereeing requires more than technical rule knowledge. Referees selected into the Elite Refereeing Program are expected to demonstrate strong game understanding, emotional control, communication skills, physical readiness, coachability, professionalism and the ability to contribute to the broader referee environment.

Selection into a squad should therefore reflect both current performance and future potential. Squad membership is not an entitlement or lifetime status. It is an opportunity to engage in a high-performance development program where referees are supported, challenged and held accountable to agreed standards.

The program comprises three connected squads: Emerging Elite, Open Elite and Senior Elite. Each squad has a distinct role within the pathway, while contributing to the shared objective of ensuring NSW remains a leading contributor to national and international referee performance.

1.1. Emerging Elite Referees Squad

Purpose:
The Emerging Elite Referees Squad exists to identify and develop high-potential referees who demonstrate the capability, attitude and performance trajectory required to progress towards elite-level officiating.

This squad should provide a structured bridge between strong state-level performance and future selection into higher-performance environments. The focus is on building the technical foundations, physical standards, match awareness, confidence and professional habits required to transition into the Open Elite Referees Squad and, where appropriate, the National Referee Academy.

Focus

- Developing core elite refereeing skills and match control.
- Improving game awareness, positioning, communication and advantage application.
- Building high-performance habits in preparation, fitness, recovery and review.
- Providing exposure to higher-level tournaments and coaching environments.
- Establishing clear individual development plans and progression goals.
- Preparing referees for transition into the Open Elite Referees Squad.
- Strengthening the NSW pipeline into the National Referee Academy.

1.2. Open Elite Referees Squad

Purpose:
The Open Elite Referees Squad exists to develop, maintain and support referees capable of officiating at the highest levels of open competition, including NSWTF major events, national tournaments and representative pathway environments.

This squad represents the leading performance group within the NSW referee pathway. Referees in this squad are expected to demonstrate consistent high-level match performance, strong decision-making under pressure, professional preparation, leadership within referee teams, and readiness for national selection opportunities.

Focus

- Delivering consistent high-level performance at NSWTF and national tournaments.
- Preparing referees for National Referee Squad selection and retention.
- Developing excellence in pressure management, communication and game control.
- Supporting referees to perform in finals, representative fixtures and high-intensity matches.
- Promoting leadership, mentoring and positive standards within the referee group.
- Using performance data, coaching feedback and review processes to drive continuous improvement.
- Strengthening NSW representation within national elite referee environments.

1.3. Senior Elite Referees Squad (Age Criteria Men 45 & Women 35)

Purpose:
The Senior Elite Referees Squad exists to recognise, support and utilise experienced referees who continue to demonstrate high-level performance in senior divisions and who can contribute meaningfully to the broader referee pathway through leadership, mentoring and standards-setting.

This squad should not be viewed only as a participation or recognition group. It should operate as a high-performance senior officiating squad where referees are expected to maintain appropriate fitness, technical competence, professionalism and match performance standards relevant to senior and master's competition.

Senior Elite referees also have an important role in strengthening the culture of NSW refereeing by supporting emerging officials, modelling preparation and behaviour, and contributing to referee education and tournament leadership.

Focus

- Delivering high-quality officiating in senior and masters competitions.
- Maintaining performance standards appropriate to senior elite competition.
- Preparing referees for National Seniors Referee Squad opportunities.
- Providing mentoring, leadership and guidance to Emerging and Open Elite referees.
- Supporting referee education, tournament culture and team-first officiating.
- Recognising the ongoing contribution of experienced referees while maintaining clear performance expectations.

2. PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS

The ERS program includes:

- Individualised Fitness Programs and Testing
- Performance Coaching and Evaluation
- Nutrition and Recovery Education
- Tournament Appointments and Reviews
- Referee Development Camps
- Personal Development Plans (PDPs)
- Annual Review and Goal Setting

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for selection:

- Must hold a Black Badge Referee accreditation
- Must meet minimum fitness benchmarks prior to selection (see Section 6)
- Must meet minimum tournament attendance requirements (Section 7), unless exempted

4. SELECTION PHILOSOPHY

Selection is based on a balanced and evidence-based assessment model, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Referees are assessed across four key pillars:

Pillar	Weighting
On-field Performance	40%
Fitness	25%
Behaviour & Professionalism	20%
Potential & Development	15%

5. ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK AND SCORING DESCRIPTORS

Scoring/Standard	Description
5 - Elite Standard	Consistently correct in high-pressure/critical moments, demonstrates proactive control of game flow
4 - Above Standard	Minor errors with minimal impact, maintains control in most match situations
3 - Meets Standard	Occasional errors impacting flow, generally competent under pressure
2 - Below Standard	Frequent errors affecting match outcomes, struggles under pressure
1 - Not Standard	Significant errors regularly impacting games, lacks control and consistency

5.1. On-Field Competencies (Scored 1–5)

Referees will be assessed against the following:

- Teamwork
- Game Awareness & Reading Play
- Advantage-Based Communication
- Try Line & Positional Control
- Interchange Management
- Decision Making (Accuracy & Consistency)
- Practical Involvement

5.2. Mental & Behavioural Competencies (Scored 1–5)

- Decision making under pressure
- Composure in high-pressure situations
- Player rapport and communication
- Supportive and team-first officiating

5.3. Scoring and Benchmarking

- Each competency scored on a 1–5 scale
- Tournament performances contribute to an aggregate performance rating
- Benchmark expectations differ across squads:
    - Emerging: Demonstrates potential and consistent improvement
    - Open Elite: Performs consistently at State Cup / NTL level
    - Senior: Demonstrates sustained high-level performance and leadership

6. FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

6.1. Testing Model

Fitness is assessed:

- Prior to final squad selection (selection/training camp model)
- Monitored throughout the season

6.2. Bronco Test Benchmarks

Aligned closely with national expectations:

Category	Male	Female
Emerging	5:30	5:40
Open Elite	5:30	5:40
Senior	6:10	6:35

Failure to meet benchmarks: may result in non-selection or conditional inclusion with improvement plan

7. TOURNAMENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Referees must attend a minimum of three (3) of the following events annually, including:

NSWTF Events	National Events
State Cup (compulsory)	The Championships (NTL equivalent)
Vawdon Cup	
Country Championships	
Junior State Cup	
Junior Regionals	

7.1. Exemption Process

Exemptions may be granted for:

- Injury
- Work or family commitments
- Financial or geographic barriers

Applications are reviewed by the State Director of Referees (DOR) and Selection Panel the reported via the NSWTF Office to the High-Performance Unit for endorsement.

8. SELECTION PROCESS

8.1. Process Overview

The selection process will be undertaken by the DOR and the Elite Referee Coaching Panel. They will make assessments as per program and present the squad to the NSWTF HPU via the office for final endorsement.

The DOR and the Elite Referee Coaching Panel in their assessment will consider:

1. Talent Identification: Conducted by appointed coaches across the tournament calendar
2. Performance Data Collection: Includes objective scoring, fitness results, and behavioural feedback
3. Selection Camp (if applicable): Final validation of fitness and performance benchmarks
4. Squad Recommendation: Prepared by ERS Coaching Panel.
    1. Emerging Squad maximum 20 members
    2. Elite Squad – maximum 20 members
    3. Senior Squad – maximum 20 members
5. Final Ratification
   Approved by the DOR and the HPU

8.2. selection Panel Composition

- Elite Referee Coaching Panel
- State Director of Referees (oversight and ratification)

8.3. Conflict of Interest

All panel members must declare conflicts and recuse themselves where required. A Conflict-of-Interest Register will be maintained.

9. SQUAD SIZE AND COMPOSITION

- Target squad size: ~20 active referees per squad
- Injured/inactive referees:
    - Placed on an inactive list
    - Do not count toward active squad cap

10. SQUAD ADDITIONS

- Primary selection occurs post-The Championships annually
- Additional inclusions may occur:
    - In exceptional circumstances only
    - Consider only on written request
    - Subject to full assessment criteria and approval via the DOR and HPU.

11. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS BY SQUAD

Open Elite Squad

- Capable of officiating Open Grand Finals at State Cup level.
- Demonstrates leadership and mentoring

Senior Squad

- Capable of officiating Masters Division (O'40s) Grand Finals at State Cup level.
- Demonstrates leadership and mentoring

Emerging Squad

- Demonstrates readiness for progression within 12–24 months

12. CULTURE, BEHAVIOUR AND STANDARDS

All squad members must adhere to: NSWTF Code of Conduct including standards of: Professionalism, Integrity, Respect, Accountability and Team-first behaviour

Breaches may result in removal.

13. MONITORING AND REVIEW

13.1. Ongoing Monitoring

- Continuous tournament evaluations
- Fitness tracking throughout the season
- Must attend 2/3 of all NSWTF HPU Referee Camps
- Must attend NSWTF Official SOO Camps.
- Must be available to assist at dedicated NSWTF Open's or Emerging Blues camps.

13.2. Annual Review

Conducted prior to The Championships:

- Performance assessment against all criteria
- Written referee self-assessment
- Individual development planning

14. REMOVAL AND NON-RE-SELECTION

A referee may be removed for:

- Failure to meet performance or fitness standards
- On field form performance level decrease
- Behaviour inconsistent with program values
- Lack of commitment
- Inability to progress toward national pathway (within ~24 months)

14.1. Process

- Formal review by Selection Panel
- Recommendation to State DOR
- Final decision ratified by HPU

14.2. Appeals Process

Referees may appeal decisions:

- Submitted in writing within 7 days
- Reviewed by an independent panel appointed by NSWTF HPU

15. INJURY AND INACTIVE STATUS

- Injured referees may be placed on an inactive list (up to 12 months)
- Must meet all criteria before returning to active status
- To be eligible for injured and inactive status the injury must be diagnosed as requiring a minimum of three months rehabilitation. NB to be verified by NSWTA Medical Director.
- An injured and inactive member of a squad maybe replaced without losing their squad status.
- When an injured or inactive member returns to active duties in a squad they do not replace a current squad member but rather are an addition to the current squad.

16. FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION

- All non-selected referees may request feedback
- Structured feedback will align with assessment criteria
- Development pathways will be clearly communicated

17. PATHWAY OVERVIEW

Emerging → Open Elite → National Referee Squad → International Opportunities

Progression is based on:

- Performance benchmarks
- Fitness standards
- Behaviour and professionalism
- Selection at national level programs

18. PROGRAM REVIEW

This program will be reviewed bi-annually in consultation with:

- State Director of Referees
- ERS Coaching Panel
- NSWTF HPU