



Portishead Town FC Walking Football

1 Over 60s Development Strategy

In March 2025 we set out a strategy that this age group should come under the control of a manager that would have oversight of all the post 60 age groups. RS took on the role for the first year.

Guiding principles

1. Support the goals of the Portishead Town FC and the Walking Football section objectives
2. There would be one manager that oversaw the age groups to manage the high level of interdependencies in the limited pool of players in the squad
3. Each age group would develop its own squad under a dedicated captain, who would look after matchday management.
4. The group would focus on developing our competitive capabilities and compete in tournaments.
5. We need to develop a consistent playing style that works across the teams to enable players moving between squads easily.
6. Developing players who do not want to play in competitions is outside of the scope of this strategy.

2 Recap on the first 12 months.

In March 2025 there was nothing in place, other than a friendly side which had played some midweek matches during the autumn of 2024. PTFC had entered a Somerset FA Over 65 friendly winter league, but had fulfilled only 1 fixture which we lost.

The first phase was to fulfil these fixtures, focus on a small squad of about 10 players to establish a good understanding of each other and build our understanding of the match play.

We won all the remaining 5 matches in the SFA league which we believe left us top, but we had used some under 65 players so technically would have been disqualified.

We then discovered that the new PTFCWF committee had also omitted to enter any of the summer leagues.

Andy Dillon agreed to take on responsibility for the Over 60s team as captain.

2.1 Summer leagues.

We ended up in 2 leagues, through good fortune and a bit of persuasion at Clevedon, we inherited 2 places when teams dropped out before the season started.

- **Over 60s league** - We came 5th out of 8, which was a very commendable performance bearing in mind the average age of our squad was nearer 70. We also had one particularly bad round where we lost every game, which shook our confidence somewhat and damaged our chances in the league.
- **Over 70s league.** We ended up runners up, thanks to using the under age player rule and a surge at the end, winning every game in the last round. This was an unexpected bonus as a couple of players reached 70 in the spring, so the squad was much better than we expected.

It started to become evident that we were using almost the same players in each tournament, regardless of age group, the squad developed a very strong bond and match play understanding that served us well. With one exception, all the Over 65s were happy to play in the Over 60s.

2.2 Winter leagues

We wanted to try out some of the other popular leagues in the Region, namely the GFA tournament at Almondsbury and the WFA league at the Hutton Moor. These are both well established leagues and it gave us an opportunity to test ourselves against different opposition from Gloucestershire and Wales at Almondsbury whilst the WFA tournament gave us access to teams from further down the M5.

We also entered the Clevedon winter tournament again. We knew this was a risk and 3 tournaments really stretched the squad, so we supplemented the squad with a couple of “loan” players from other teams. Without them we would have not been able to meet our fixture obligations.

- **Gauntlet Cup** - We started the Winter with the Western Rebels Gauntlet tournament in October, and we won it. So that was a great start and our first cup.
- **Gloucester FA Over 60s.** with our average being nearer 70 this was always going to be tough, but we did well and ended in mid table, largely due to a large amount of draws. What we didn't expect was the lack of willingness of our own 60 to 65 group to attend tournaments. We were dependent on the Over 65 age group players to fill the fixtures along with a loan player from Western Rebels, Paul Smith, who we are very grateful to. The tournament arrangements at GFA were not the best, it was almost a self serve tournament with no obvious match day organisation.
- **Hutton Moor Over 65s**, once again these games on a Monday proved a challenge with two key players not being available due to other Monday commitments. Our squad was not as strong as we would want, and we were fortunate to have a loan player from St Pauls, Nigel Walker, playing every games. We didn't lose many games but lacked the cutting edge to really challenge so finished in mid table. The Hutton Moor tournament was very well managed but the actual facilities were not the best, as players were exposed to the elements with no shelter, there were also schedule clashes with the Clevedon tournament after late changes.
- **Clevedon Over 65s** was our best tournament and we were consistently able to field a strong squad which showed in our performance. We only lost 3 out of 21 game. were part of the leading pack and finished top scorers in the tournament. What let us down was the amount of draws which we can almost entirely put down to running penalties. We were also disadvantaged by the scheduling of WFA tournament, on two occasions there was only 36 hours between them in Jan and Feb.

2.3 What did we learn?

We have learned a lot over the last 12 months, about the strengths and weaknesses in our squad. Our gamble on 3 leagues paid off, as we learned a lot about ourselves, which players are committed and we learned a lot about match play, the best team of individuals do not win football matches.

In summary we have a very strong Over 65 squad that can compete with anyone at any level, and we should expect to start winning leagues in the future. The Over 70s could be even stronger if the players can stay fit, but we are lacking depth, and a couple of absences can really expose this.

- **Over 60s age group.** There has been a lack of interest from our players in the under 65 age group, this could be down to a couple of reasons:
 1. **Demographics** – people are working till 67 now so this age group may not have the flexibility to flex working hours to play for the club, We have noticed our opponents in this age group look nearer 70 like us.
 2. **Commitment** – we have a number of players that could play in these tournaments, but for a range of reasons, they are rarely available consistently or they just don't want to play in tournaments.
 3. **Availability** - we lost 2 or 3 reliable players from the Spring 2025 and they just didn't make themselves available.

It is not all bad news as 3 players have now committed to the summer fixtures, which is a good step in the right direction, however the lowest point of the year was when we could not field a team for the Clevedon tournament in August.

- **Over 65s.** This age group was enhanced by having a good quality goal keeper behind us and the commitment of the players, many of whom played every games in the winter. Adie Phillips ~~number of the players have~~ **has** been selected to play for Somerset in **this** ~~their~~ age group, showing the **potential** ~~quality~~ of players in the squad, there is also a real competitive edge and a desire to win, that at times has bubbled over on the pitch. It explains why we only lost 3 games at Clevedon, scored the most goals but that passion also explains why we gave away so many winning positions due to walking penalties.
- **Over 70s.** Based on the performance last summer, and this squad includes a lot of players in the Over 65s, this could well be our strongest squad. Indeed, two players are now regularly playing for Somerset Over 70s and one other in the squad. Unfortunately, some leagues are now removing the “under age” player rule that enables the Over 65 goalie and one player to supplement the team, so we could find ourselves without enough players.
- **Match play sessions** We can only get so far without set play freekicks and routes out of defence. The squad have learned much of it during games, and with a stable squad everyone has learned how to play in their position.

We have started monthly daytime sessions dedicated to practicing basics and having set plays. When we applied these in tournaments it had an immediate effect, maybe not directly on actual goals but the movements created chances.

- **Game Management.** As the season has gone on we've learned that too many changes can leave momentary gaps that opponents are smart enough to exploit, as we learned in

one round of the Clevedon Over 60s, when we probably had our best 8 ever, and managed to lose every game.

Consequently changes and rotations have been minimised whilst still making sure everyone gets plenty of game time. We are getting to the point where the players recognise that the team and result are more important than an individuals minutes. This one is very hard sometimes, but we are very grateful to those players that recognise this.

- **Discipline** the passion gets the better of us at times, mainly with poor refereeing. We give away a lot of walking penalties, mainly because the team are so committed and the criteria for not walking is so obscure and open to interpretation, but unless we deal with this we wont win anything.
- **Matchday management** is particularly hard as all players want to focus on their own preparation and no one wants the responsibility of being captain, so we now meet earlier to give time for the manager to get himself and everything else sorted and the players to get their game heads on.

2.4 Squad for 2025/26 season

As the manger, I am very grateful to the commitment and amazing performances of the following players, who between them have played around 60 games during the winter season. Other players may have played one or two games, so I'm sorry if I missed you out.

	Clevedon Over 65	Hutton Moor Over 65	GFA Over 60s	County Recognition
Colin Barnes				
Glenn Jones				
Pete Rodgers				
Rod Sowden				
Adie Philips				
Chris Mountford				
John Mac				
Andy Hufford				
Paul Smith (on loan)				
Pete Milson				
Gavin Meadle (Keeper)				
Paul Gibson				
Nigel Walker				
Steve Parslow				
Pete Condon				

3 Plan for 2026/7 seasons

The plan for the year is basically to continue the development, learn from the lessons of last season and establish ourselves as one of the best teams in the regions.

3.1 General

Goalkeepers – we are very short in the club. We have been lucky to have Gavin Meadle join us, but he is not always available so we often lose a good outfield player to fill the gap at Hutton Moor.

Discipline – we need the players “simmering” and not bubbling over, it is only competitive but it has cost us, in particular when it comes to walking offences. We have been improving but it is still an issue we need to work on.

Captains – we need to keep an eye out for an opportunity to make the captain appointments as per the original strategy.

3.2 Squads

- **Over 60s** - Planning for the next 12 months initially assumed that we would drop the Over 60 team because of the apathy. However, we have one player back from travels and commitment from two others, which will make a difference so we have decided to give it another try in the summer. The problem is if we do not have this group, there is no development system for players.
- **Over 65s** – this squad is strengthened with John Mac and we have high hopes for a top 2 place in one of the tournaments in the next 12 months.
- **Over 70s** – after the runners up finish at Clevedon last summer, we have high hopes that this squad will win that tournament this year especially with the addition of Pete Condon.
- **Over 75s** – currently we don't have the numbers to consider having a squad.

3.3 Structure

Currently we are running with a single manager for the 3 teams as per the Strategy, but with support of an assistant in the form of Adie Phillips, and others have stepped in if we are both unavailable, in particular Colin Barnes and John Mac.

In truth, nobody wants the match day responsibilities as they just want to play football.

Having one person having an eye on all the upcoming fixtures does provide the continuity and can be done from anywhere in the world, although sending begging messages from Costa Rica and having to cancel the August round of the Over 60s was frustrating and embarrassing.

It would be helpful to identify a specific captain for the Over 60s, so they can focus on developing this team, as it is a different group of players.

3.4 Summer tournaments

For the summer of 2026 we have decided to focus our efforts on the Clevedon tournaments for a few reasons:

- They are being played on our pitch
- It is less travelling for our players
- The facilities are the best in the region now
- It is the best run tournament.
- Scheduling is consistent, i.e. always on a Wed and no date clashes.

We have entered teams in 3 age groups, Over 60s, Over 65s and Over 70s

3.5 Winter tournaments

This will depend on how the Summer tournaments go, but it is likely that we will enter Over 65 and Over 70s teams at Clevedon as a minimum.