



FOOTBALL  
NSW

# **FUTURE SAPPHIRES PROGRAM 2026**



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# PROGRAM

The Future Sapphires program is a supplementary program for talented female football players in the Under 15 and Under 16 age grades. The program has been introduced to maintain a 'best vs best' environment for those talented players that form the Football NSW State team whom compete at the Emerging Matildas Championships each year.

The Future Sapphires program will work in tandem with Clubs and their technical staff to ensure all players involved receive a minimum of four training contacts per week, alongside the regular season Club matchday. This will ensure Football NSW and its Clubs continue to foster high-performance environments and meet key recommendations of Football Australia and FIFA.

The Future Sapphires program is a 35-week program, delivered directly by Football NSW at Valentine Sports Park. The Program will sit atop the Football NSW led talented player pathway in NSW, underpinned by Club programs, the Talent Support Program (TSP) and Talent Development Scheme (TDS) matches in association with Football Australia.

The player-centered program will be strongly focused on the development of the individual within the program, with in-depth support provided to players across key competency areas:

- Technical Development
- Tactical Development
- Physical Development
- Psychological Development
- Personal Development

The Program technical staff will work closely with the individual and their Club coach/Technical Director to ensure alignment and transparency to provide the best environment and opportunities for the individual.

| TOPIC                         | DETAIL                                    |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Age Groups (Aligned with EMC) | Under 15 and Under 16                     |
| Length                        | 35 weeks (Nov-Aug)                        |
| Training                      | Two (2) per week                          |
| Duration                      | 90 minutes (min)                          |
| Matches                       | Min. 10                                   |
| Individual development plans  | Yes, minimum 3 & in partnership with Club |
| Cost                          | \$1,100                                   |

# WHO WERE THE SAPPHIRES?

The NSW Sapphires (formerly known as the NSW Institute of Sport) were a women's association football club that represented the state of New South Wales in the Women's National Soccer League which ran between 1996 and 2004. Throughout the nine seasons that the competition ran, the Sapphires won three Championships and were also runners up on three occasions, making them one of the most successful teams in the short-lived league.

The NSW Sapphires had several players who would go on to represent the Matildas at international level, in addition to winning the prestigious Julie Dolan Medal.

The Sapphires would be one of the strongest teams in the competition, winning their first silverware in the 1997-98 season, with experienced Matilda Julie Murray winning the 1998-1999 Julie Dolan Medal.

The Sapphires would have further players represent them at the highest level in addition to being recognised for their contribution to the women's game, with Joanne Peters and Taryn Rockall receiving the Julie Dolan medal.

Despite having been defunct for almost 20 years, Football NSW paid tribute to the success and history of the club by naming the new women's state knockout cup the Sapphire Cup. Now, a supplementary development program for talented female footballers will be called the Future Sapphires program.



## NOTABLE PLAYERS

- Catherine Cannuli
- Julie Murray
- Joanne Peters
- Taryn Rockall
- Leena Khamis
- Kylie Ledbrook
- Michelle Carney

Also notable **manager** in Alen Stajcic.

# PLAYER SERVICES

Players within the Future Sapphires program can expect to include the following:



## STAFF & TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

- Appointment of a Program Technical Manager
- A & B Diploma qualified coaching staff
- Goalkeeper B Diploma qualified coaching staff
- Strength & Conditioning Head Coach, Sports Science degree qualified
- Physiotherapist
- Video analyst



## DELIVERY

- Technical focused, individualised sessions and training plans
- Tactical training within game-based situations, including participation in tournaments
- High quality facilities; changeroom, gym, pitch quality, player welfare space
- Two training sessions per week
- Matchdays during the season; inclusion in tournaments, high-level female games, fixtures against male teams



## PLAYER SERVICES

- Plyometric testing
- GPS tracking and data usage
- Individual Development Plans – Three-way shared between player, Club & Football NSW
- Personal education workshops – Health, nutrition, sleep, body, mind
- Filming of training & matches for video review
- Parent education workshops

# PATHWAY





# PROGRAM DETAILS

Football NSW will issue invitations to players to form part of the 2026 Future Sapphires program in November 2025 directly.

Once an offer is accepted, Football NSW will coordinate with the player's Club on how to best manage player loads, communications, development plans and feedback between the three parties.

The Future Sapphires program will commence training in November 2025.

Unless notified, training and matches will take place at Valentine Sports Park, the Home of Football NSW.

Players outside of the Future Sapphires program may be invited into the Program from time-to-time to gain valuable development experience for a short-term period.

Inclusion in the Future Sapphires program does not automatically guarantee inclusion in the Football NSW State team to compete at the Emerging Matildas Championships. Final squad announcement will be made at least 8 weeks prior to the tournament, expected to be in April 2026.

It is expected that only players within the Future Sapphires Program are to form the State team. This includes players in the initial and any future intake.

Aside from the Emerging Matildas Championships, Football NSW will endeavor to source tournament opportunities for the program, including Talent Support Program tournaments, interstate tournaments and overseas tournaments. Further information and expectations will be released to program participants.



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