



# THE 2018/19 PFA A-LEAGUE REPORT



# Supporting the Players Building the Game



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# A-LEAGUE FOREWORD



In 1994, Major League Baseballer and MLB Players Association Executive Member, Scott Sanderson, asked his fellow professionals:

“The central question is very simple...which of you players here think we should give the players who come after us less than we received from the players who came before us?”

Two themes intersect at the centre of this question, the same that now sit at the heart of the A-League's future: legacy and ambition.

With the end of the 2018/19 A-League season came the end of FFA's autonomy as the league's operator. Management of the competition will now transition to the professional clubs.

And the question for the owners is effectively the same as posed by Sanderson; in inheriting the most influential piece of the Australian footballing puzzle, are they committed to building a legacy so that future generations of players, fans, coaches and support staff can realise the aspirational ambitions each have for our wonderful sport?

The evidence of recent seasons, as documented in the past three PFA A-League Reports, suggests not.

From a player perspective, most key performance indicators have trended negatively, with 61.5% of players coming off contract, 40% of players starting the season at a new club, an average life span at a club of 2.4 years and more than half of all players not confident about the direction of their career.

Hardly the sort of career that rational parents would be pushing their children toward.

Equally, support continues to trend downwards with decreasing viewership and attendances. This was matched by the players' perception that match atmosphere and pitch quality dropped – two fundamental pre-conditions to an authentic football experience.

This stagnation has been wholly attributed to the independence impasse; the awakening within the club owners of the futility of investing in an asset that wasn't theirs and one they felt that were precluded from controlling.

The club owners now have the control they have fought for. And with that they now have the responsibility for building a legacy for the A-League that supports all stakeholders and realises the eclectic ambitions we all have for the sport.

The owners have a responsibility to improve the career path for Australian footballers – from youth development all the way through respecting a player's rights to represent their country. They have a responsibility to rationally reimagine the economic model for the A-League to ensure that the broken salary cap is scrapped and clubs are given the opportunity to build value in their players and build value in their clubs. That Thailand recouped more transfer revenue than Australia last year is testament to our outdated model.

Through the PFA, the players supported the club owners in seeking the structural change the game needed. In so doing, it is relying on the club owners being incentivised to invest, accountable to one another and committed to building clubs (and a competition) that can compete at the highest level with all sports and all nations.

The players, as always, have a fundamental role within this.

It is their performances that amplify the sport. Their deeds that go viral. Their smiles that win the hearts of fans. Their genius that wins their minds. Their journeys – perhaps from Wellington to Munich – fill our lives.

As we enter a critical new phase in football, we must focus on the legacy we collectively wish to build and the ambitions for the game we want to realise. Anything short of that, and a once in a generation opportunity is lost.

**JOHN DIDULICA**  
Chief Executive

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# A-LEAGUE SURVEY

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## METHODOLOGY



Where this symbol appears you will see data and quotes from the PFA's major annual survey of A-League players. Every A-League player was sent a link to the online survey in the weeks leading up to and following the 2018/19 A-League Grand Final. 61 players responded to the survey, although not every player completed every question.

The survey covered a broad range of areas impacting a player's career, from their contract, to work and study outside of football, to transition-readiness, to assessments of their club, the A-League, collective bargaining, and the PFA.

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

## A NEW DAWN BREAKS

The 2018/19 season represented the end of an era in two important ways. Firstly, this was the last season the A-League will be governed and managed by Football Federation Australia, with the clubs set to run the league independently from the 2019/20 season, bringing it in line with most professional leagues around the world. Secondly, this was the final season before the next round of A-League expansion, marking the end of the A-League's most stable period of membership, having featured ten clubs for the past eight seasons and the current roster of clubs for the past seven.

These milestones are noteworthy in their own right, but they also provide essential context for the interpretation of all the other information in this report. The report's main purpose is to track key performance indicators across all aspects of the A-League, and those outcomes are obviously impacted by the way the league is run and the number of teams in it.

For example, one of the main thrusts of the club owners' push for independence is that they had little incentive to invest in their clubs when they were not guaranteed to receive proportional benefit from a more successful league. Specifically, as the prospect of independence drew nearer, clubs could have been forgiven for adopting a wait-and-see approach to short-to-medium-term planning. At the same time, FFA has been running the league knowing that the years-long governance saga would likely lead to independence, disincentivising it to redirect its limited resources away from other programs and into the A-League.

These dynamics help explain the generally accepted view that the league and its clubs have suffered from undercapitalisation in recent years.


It is obvious that the recent declines in attendance and broadcast figures are at least in part affected by a lack of investment in the product. But the impact goes beyond fan interest. The uncertainty of recent years will likely have impacted everything from the length of contracts offered by

clubs to players, to the resources afforded to their football departments. In turn, these impacts will flow through to the data contained in this report, such as player churn, age analysis and on-field performance metrics.

We will never be able to accurately measure these impacts on the league's progress because there is no control version of history against which to compare what we've witnessed and captured in these pages. This makes it difficult for those seeking to take an evidence-based approach to strategic decision-making in this industry. Some subjectivity is required. Some changes which occur as a result of independence may begin to show in next year's report, while others may take years to reveal themselves.

The change in the number of teams and matches from next season will provide another challenge for year-on-year analysis of key metrics. The steady state of ten clubs for the past eight seasons has provided a fertile ground for identifying trends in player movements, competitive balance, injuries, team success and technical quality, to name just a few. Because 'all else' was held equal season to season for a useful stretch of time, any changes in these kinds of focus areas would be of interest of decision-makers. Policies could be reviewed, or structural issues pinpointed.

For the foreseeable future, changes to the number of teams and length of the season will add noise to the signal. Will new teams increase or decrease competitive balance? If there are more or fewer injuries, to what extent do we attribute the change to the addition of a bye, or the change in average age, or the extra local derbies (meaning fewer flights)? Some change is not noise, but an intended feature of expansion. For instance, expansion is supposed to create more opportunities for younger players. Future reports will assess whether this has been successful. Either way, it's clear that conclusions drawn from data in the next few years will come with a caveat. This adds value to the current, pre-expansion data.



A key outcome of the one-year extension of the A-League Collective Bargaining Agreement was the establishment of the Professional Men's Football Committee. The Committee will feature members from the PFA, FFA and A-League clubs and be tasked with reviewing structural and policy issues affecting the A-League, including the salary cap and transfer system. This committee should take an evidence-based approach to answering the questions facing the competition, and the richest, most useful evidence is from the stable period 2012/13 to 2018/19: after Western Sydney Wanderers but before Western United.

This is why this report looks back not only at the past season but the years preceding, particularly with our special feature on player age analysis, in conjunction with Australian football stats guru Andrew Howe.

What matters most to players is that the league thrives, and both independence and expansion should be a means to that end. More than any other stakeholder, the players have suffered from the stagnation caused in part by the independence impasse. It is critical for the future health of the game that 2019/20 represents a reboot for the A-League brand.

The addition of Western United and the opening of the Wanderers' new stadium should prove to be shots in the arm. But they alone will not be enough. Previous sugar hits have come and gone. It's critical that clubs now turn their attention to making investments which lead to sustained success: engaging their fanbases, creating a more compelling product, and building a sustainable pipeline of talent – our industry's biggest asset. The players will happily partner with the clubs in a journey towards real change; not just in the boardroom, but in building a successful business.



# AGE ANALYSIS

Perth Glory set a new record this season as the oldest team in Australian domestic football history, based on the average age of starters and substitutes on match days. Perth's players were on average 30.6 years old when they took the field, beating the previous record of 30.1, held by Sydney FC from just a year earlier in 2017/18.

There's no doubt that Australian football teams are getting older. In the National Soccer League, the 'average average age' (the average of all the average ages of each team) was 25.2 years. In the A-League era, it's 27.0 years. And even within the A-League era, the average has been increasing rapidly; taking just the past two seasons, the average is 27.6 – a full year older than in the first season of the A-League in 2005/06.

Average age:

All Seasons	25.6
NSL	25.6
All A-League	27.0
A-League 2017-2019	27.6

Data courtesy of Andrew Howe

As discussed in the Strategic Context section, it is a valuable moment to take stock of this kind of trend because the recent stable period of A-League composition will end with expansion next season. When new clubs enter the league, noise enters the data. It is worth noting though that expansion does not necessarily equate to more opportunities for young players; when the league grew from eight to ten teams in 2009/10, the average average age actually increased from 26.5 to 26.9 years.

There could be any number of theories to explain why the A-League is getting older. Has sports science advanced, sustaining the performance of older players? Have improved conditions made the career more viable for longer? Is there a lack of talent coming through? Are our best young players going abroad, leaving only journeymen to populate our domestic competition? The truth could be a combination of some of these and other factors.

Perth and Sydney's successes encouraged us to explore the relationship between age and winning.

First, we needed a way to compare the success of each team across seasons of different sizes and lengths. So we defined success by measuring the percentage of available points each team won in each of the 45 A-League and NSL seasons. For example, in 2016/17 there were 27 rounds, so 81 league points were available. Sydney FC won 66 points, 81.5% of the total possible. This was the most successful season in Australian history by this measure, achieved by the fourth oldest team on record (average age: 29.4 years).

We analysed the relationship between the average age of each team and the percentage of points won within each of the 45 seasons, obtaining a correlation coefficient for each season. Statistically-minded readers will know that correlation values range from -1 to 1, where a perfect correlation gives a value of 1 (in this case, a season where the oldest team finishes first, the second oldest team finishes second, and so on). A perfectly negative relationship would be -1 (if the youngest teams always won), and if there was no link between age and success, the result would be close to 0.

The average of those 45 coefficients is 0.25, indicating that there is a weak positive relationship between age and success within seasons. We don't have the data, but it's reasonable to assume that this would be the case in most sports, if experienced players generally perform at their best, whereas young players are selected in part on their potential to improve over time.

It becomes interesting when we chart the data, highlighting the difference between the two eras of Australian football. In the NSL, the link between age and success was positive, weak and



stable, on average 0.18. In the A-League era, we see that the link is stronger – 0.38 on average – and rising quickly.

In the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2018/19 seasons in particular, the relationship has become so strong that average age was nearly a proxy for the league table at the end of the season.

What's going on? There is a chicken and egg dynamic to this question. Are clubs driving this trend with their recruitment strategies? Are the clubs that invest more in their squads intentionally seeking to build older rosters, creating a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy? Or is this trend emerging organically, in which case by highlighting it, we may cause all clubs to value older players higher going forward.

It does not really matter, because either scenario has the same policy ramifications for Australian football. The takeaway is that young players entering the league are not as competitive relative to older players as they have been in the past.

This is not caused by an outflux of talented young Australian players overseas. The PFA's 2017 Player Pathway Study showed that our representation in overseas leagues on par or superior to the A-League has declined, not increased. If there were players coming through, they would be here.

It is possible that older players are sustaining their performance levels in their later years due to improved sports science. It is also quite possible that players in their career twilights today have a relative advantage over similar players in the past because they are the first generation of Australian players to have a full career of fully professional football under their belts. Consider players like Alex Wilkinson and Alex Brosque, who were emerging players when the A-League began. It makes

sense that their cohort could become relatively stronger than players five-to-ten years older than them.

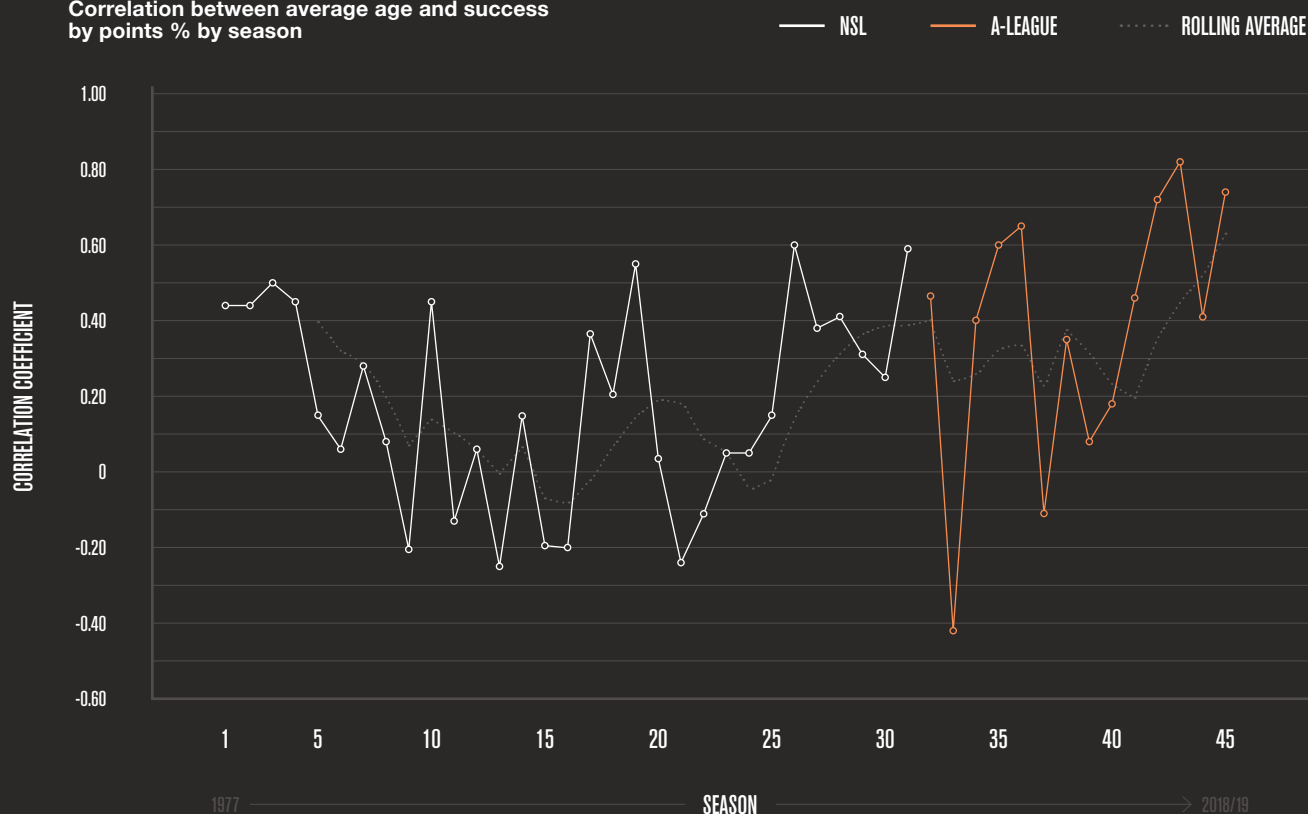
The one theory that fits all the evidence, however, is that we are simply not producing the same quality of player that we once did. The trend suggests that older players who would normally be either losing their place in the team to a better younger player or losing to another team with better younger players in it, are now able to keep playing and keep winning longer. This theory fits in with our decline in international competitiveness, in terms of national team performance and the quantum of minutes our players achieve in top leagues.

It is not new to suggest that Australia has youth development challenges. It is also not new to suggest that A-League regulations should serve to address those challenges. It is a win-win for the clubs and the broader game to have more talented players coming through.

But this research may serve to help pinpoint where the bottleneck is occurring. A lot of discourse has centred on the limited opportunities available to young players in the A-League, and the impact of foreign players or the number of teams on increasing or decreasing those opportunities. But for recent seasons, with all things held equal in terms of regulations, there appears to be fewer young players breaking through the door. Simply manufacturing more match minutes for young players may be a band-aid solution rather than addressing the root cause somewhere within the pipeline.

The PFA has partnered with Victoria University to undertake a major study into Australia's Golden Generation of male players to explore this topic further, which will be released in late 2019.

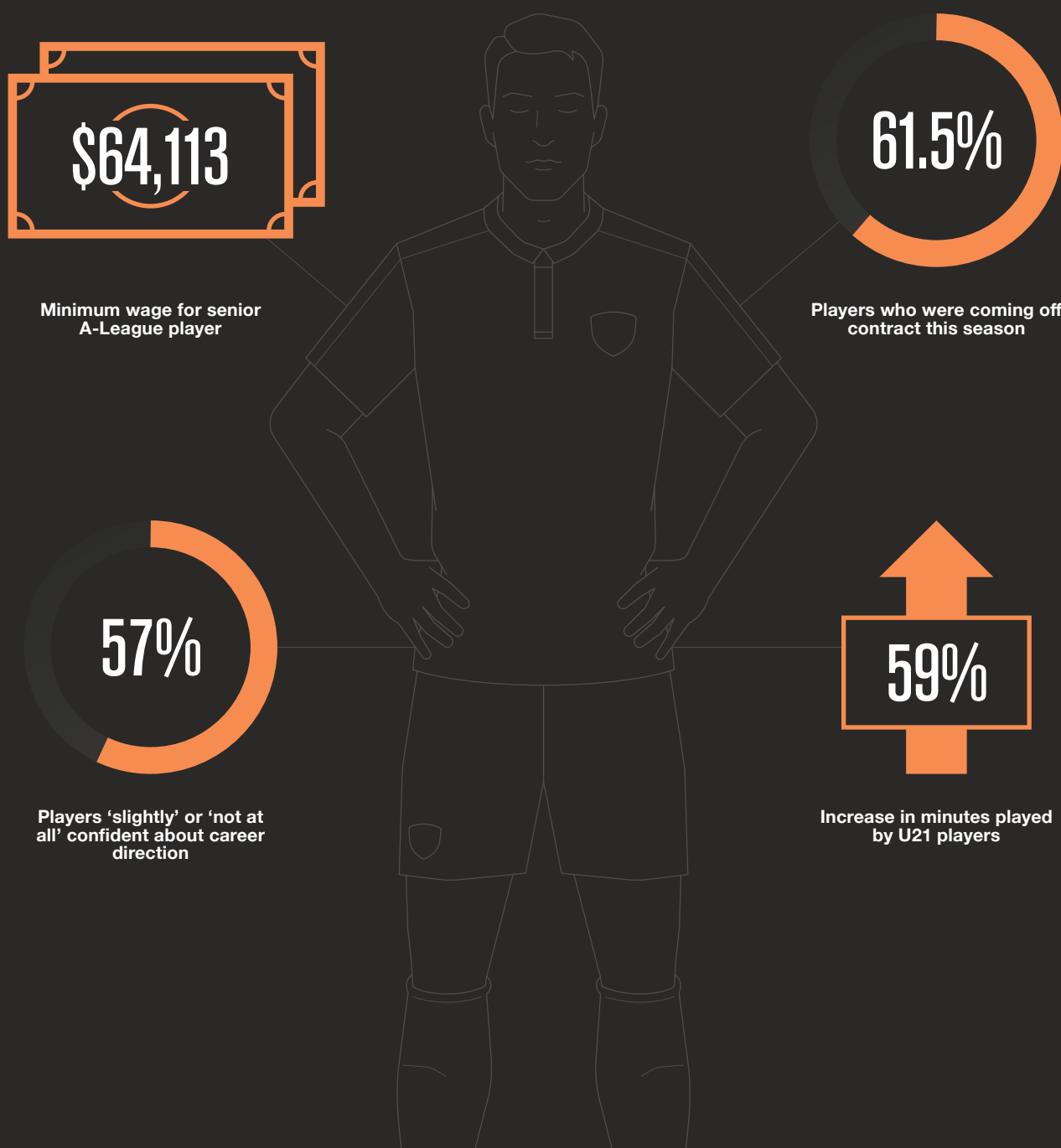
**Correlation between average age and success by points % by season**





# EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

# SNAPSHOT



This section includes some of the defining metrics of the players' careers and provides a cross-section of the A-League cohort in terms of age, squad stability, and foreign players.

We see that player churn remains a challenge for our members, contributing to a lack of uncertainty and control around their careers.

The narrative around the opportunities available to young players in the A-League is questioned by the finding that players aged 20 and under when the season kicked off saw

significantly more game time this season than in 2017/18. The number of these players increased from 43 to 58 and the minutes they played rose from 17,016 to 27,094.

Visa players absorbed less minutes than they did in 2017/18, down from 27.8% to 24.8% of the total pitch time.

The main changes activated in the one-year Collective Bargaining Agreement extension are outlined, with a view to giving clubs more flexibility to maintain the stable squads which we show correlate with success.

# COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

The A-League Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) has been extended to cover the 2019/20 season with some changes, outlined below. The one-year extension was agreed to due to the uncertainty about the new independent era. The players conceded that the best course was to continue, for now, under largely the same framework as prescribed by the 2015-2019 CBA, before conducting a broader negotiation in a more certain operating environment for all parties.

To agree to this concession, the players sought changes for the extension period which would offer some immediate relief

from the most pressing issues in the A-League employment framework. Specifically, the changes agreed are designed to give the clubs more flexibility in contracting players, and further incentivise clubs to develop and retain their own talent. The intention is to reduce the player churn which has harmed players, clubs and the league in recent seasons.

Expansion club Western United will have a higher salary cap to compensate for the fact it cannot utilise some of the concessions available to other clubs, such as loyalty players.

## Summary of changes to A-League CBA for 2019/20



### Contracting Model

Establishment of Professional Men's Football Committee with PFA, FFA and Clubs to review model (e.g. Salary Cap, transfers) for 2020/21 and beyond



### Base Payments

90% floor up to \$2.88m from \$2.75m



### Loyalty Players

\$200k cap abolished + threshold down to 4 years from 5 years



### Banking Increase

Up to 2 years of banking can be spent in 2019/20, up to 10% of salary cap



### Minimum Wage

\$100 match fee for minimum wage player on team sheet



### Homegrown Players

\$200k cap abolished



### Mature Age Rookie

Abolished, but limited use by clubs with academy now focus



### Salary Cap

Up to \$3.2m from \$3.063m



### Expansion Club

Higher salary cap of \$3.6m + additional PDP funding



### Scholarship Players

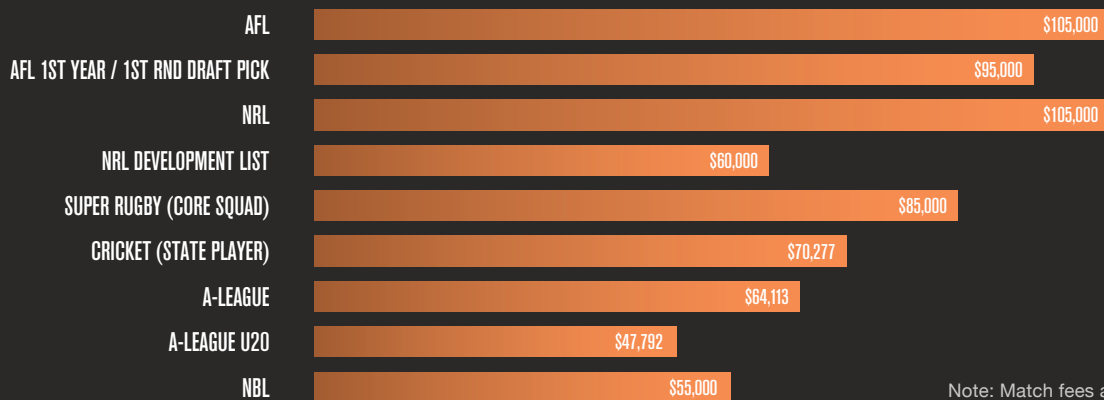
Each club allowed 9, up from 6 in 2018/19



### Player Development

Increase to \$1.81m

# MINIMUM WAGE BENCHMARKING



Note: Match fees and bonuses not included

## PLAYER CHURN

### % of players off contract



Each year, around one third of players coming off contract are aged 22 or under.

Once again, a staggeringly high percentage of players were coming off contract this season. While the figure did not reach the record high of 2017/18, the figure was still well above the medium-term average. This is the equivalent of nearly seven players out of every starting XI being in the final year (or only year) of their current deal.

There is little new to say about the negative impacts of this high amount of player churn on all stakeholders: players, clubs, and fans. The PFA has presented a wealth of evidence in the past two years to show how all stakeholders would benefit from more stable rosters. Clubs suffer from lost transfer revenues and turned off fans. The league suffers from an inferior product due to the chopping and changing without a net increase in individual quality.

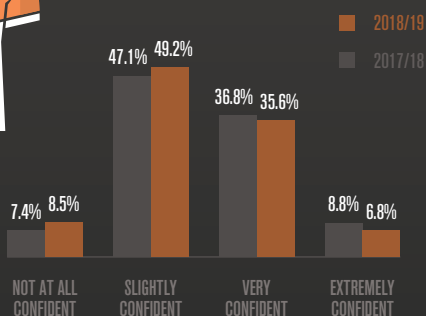
But while the statistics are confronting and compelling, we cannot forget the human stories behind the numbers. Each of the 152 players off contract had to deal with existential uncertainty beyond the next six months. Will I have a job? Where will I be living? Will my salary radically change? This instability has flow-on effects to all aspects of players' lives. Forward planning is put on hold, support networks are left behind, families are uprooted, partners' lives are disrupted, off-field development is potentially stunted.

It may be noted that as the A-League transitions to independence, many staff at FFA will face uncertain futures. Anyone would sympathise with individuals in this difficult position. But the PFA would make the point that this situation is no different than that experienced by the majority of our members every single season; not as an unfortunate one-off, but as a systematic result of the current regulations.

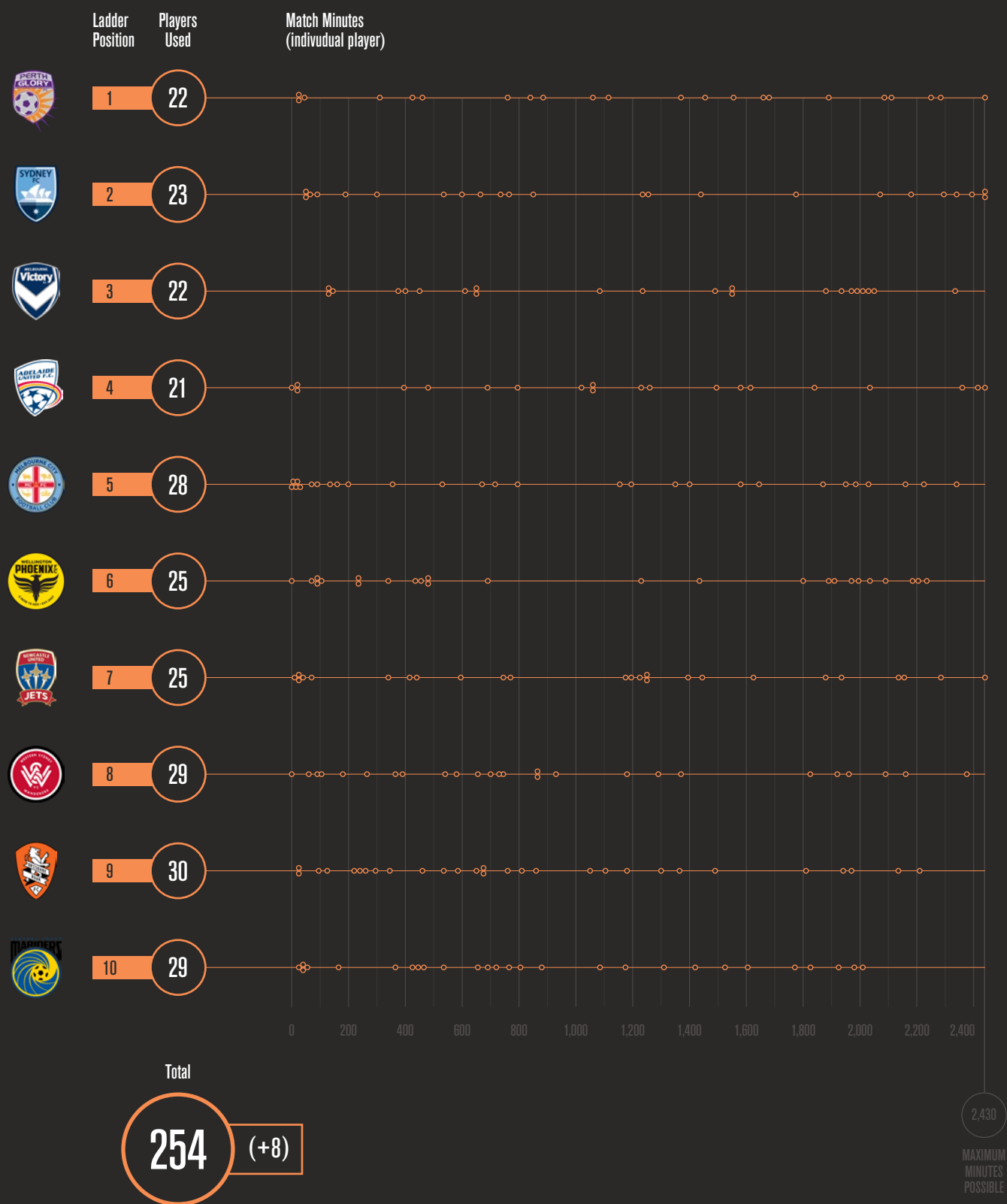
The players generally support regulations which benefit the collective, even if some individuals suffer. The PFA takes an evidence-based approach to determining whether policies meet this benchmark. The evidence suggests the salary cap has caused harmful side effects without achieving its stated objectives.



In general, how confident are you about the direction of your control over your football career?

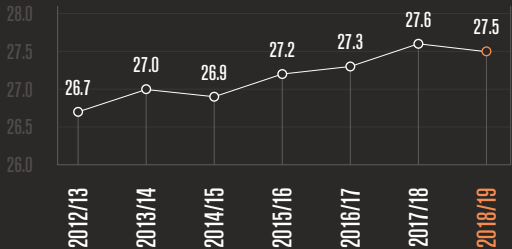


# SQUAD STABILITY



# MATCH MINUTES

Average age of players per season



Average age of starting players and substitutes, on match day  
Data courtesy of Andrew Howe

As usual, there was a strong correlation between squad stability and team success. The four clubs which missed the finals fielded more players than the average; the top four fielded the fewest. Seven players from the perennially stable Sydney FC recorded more than 2,000 minutes throughout the season; only one from Central Coast managed that feat.

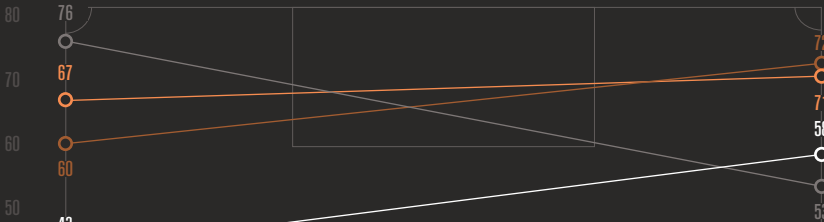
This evidence should signpost to clubs that maintaining a stable squad and minimising injuries are two of the surest ways to rise up the ladder.

There was a shift in the age profile of the A-League this season, with players aged 20 or under when the season started accumulating 27,094 minutes of game time, an increase of 59% from 2017/18. Fifteen more players from this bracket reached the pitch this season, up to 58 from 43.

This gain came at the expense of players aged 31 and older, of whom 23 fewer made an appearance. This slightly bucked a trend of an ageing A-League in recent seasons.

Number of players who made an appearance

- U21
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 +

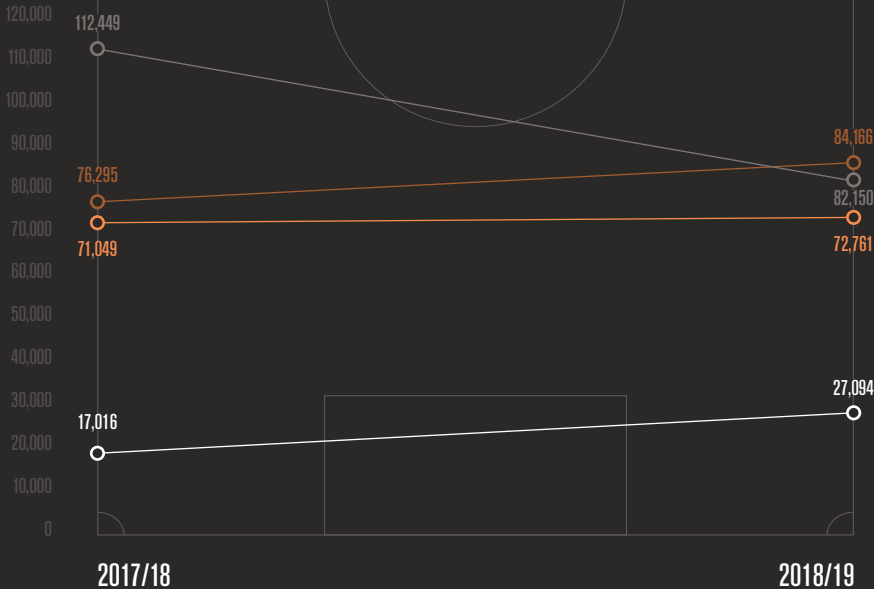


Total players who made an appearance

254

Total minutes played

- U21
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 +



Total minutes played

266,171

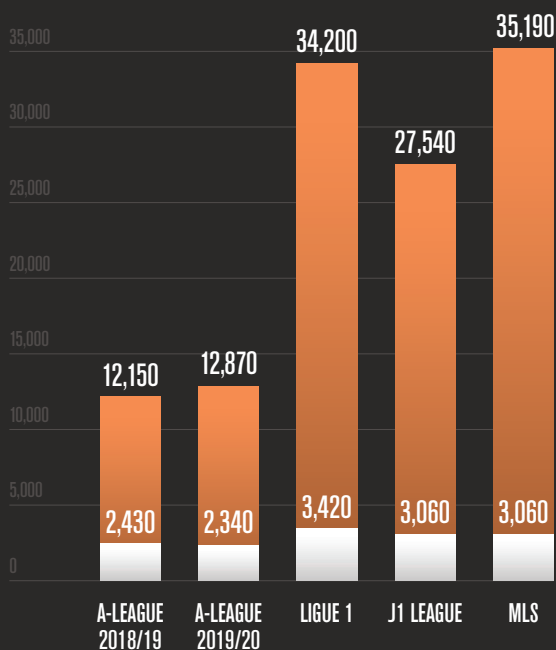
Average minutes played (per player)

1,048



# MATCH MINUTES COMPARISON

League Comparison



Note: Regular seasons only

Last year's report highlighted the lack of match minutes in the A-League relative to important international benchmark leagues. Individual players here have fewer minutes available to them, and the total number of matches across the season is well under half those played in France, Japan and the US – countries which also have second tier leagues not considered in this comparison.

It is obvious that our players are being starved of the precious game time which drives development. Yet despite expansion bringing the quantum of match minutes in the new A-League season up from 12,150 to 12,870, the reduction in the season length means each player can only play up to 2,340. If we added cup, continental and play-off matches to the equation for all countries, the A-League would fall further behind.

The A-League's length is subject to a tug-of-war. On the one hand, our development imperatives suggest growth is needed. On the other hand, it is hemmed in by stadium availability and concerns of the broadcaster.

Those contractionary influences are proving dominant. Ironically, this is a self-defeating approach because if our players' development is short-changed, the quality of the product is undermined, risking a softening of the demand to see them in those large stadiums and on that broadcaster.

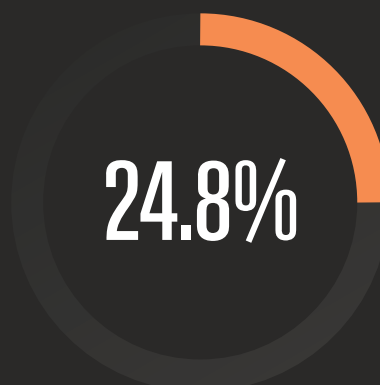


# FOREIGN PLAYERS

Total foreign players



Percentage of minutes played by foreign players



Location of foreign players in the A-League





# LEAGUE ASSESSMENT

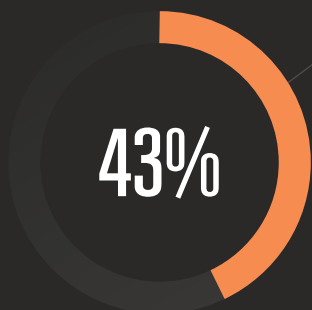
# SNAPSHOT



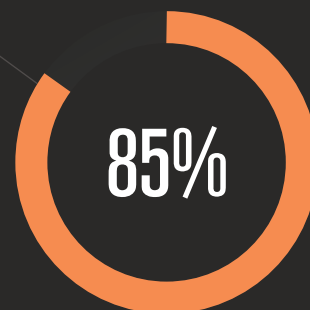
Points separating first and last place



Seasons in a row with declining crowds



Matches won by 2 or more goals



Players who think the salary cap should be scrapped

This section fleshes out the data behind the perception outlined earlier in the report: that of a competition which has been starved of attention and investment during the governance saga which has now finally ended with independence.

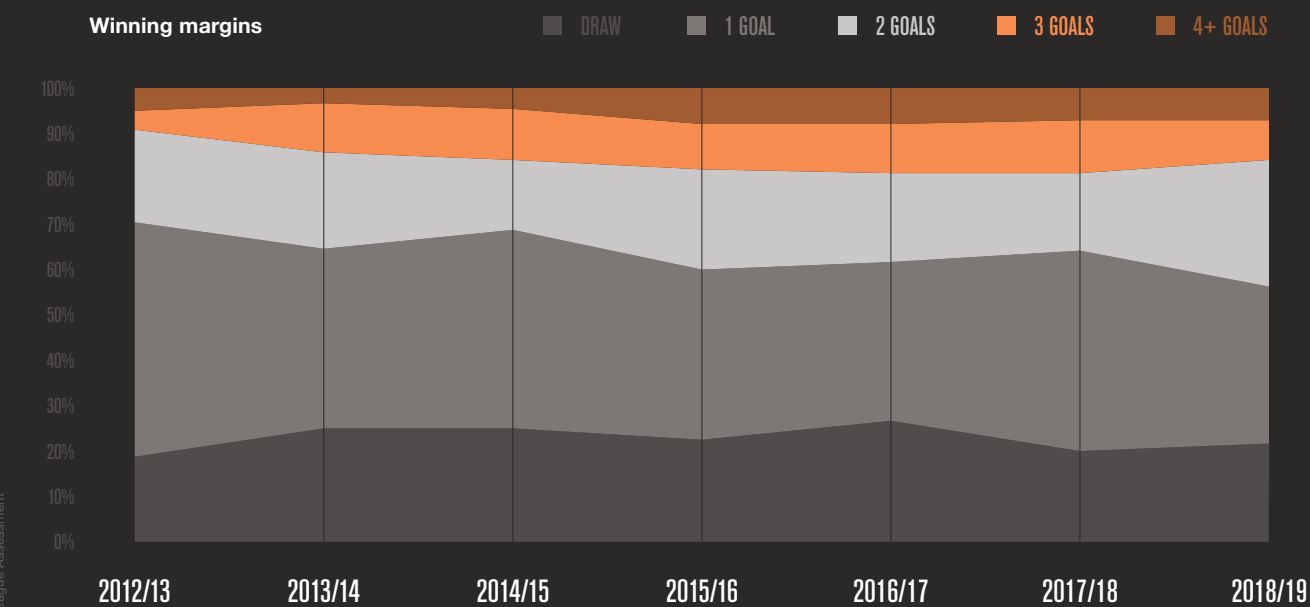
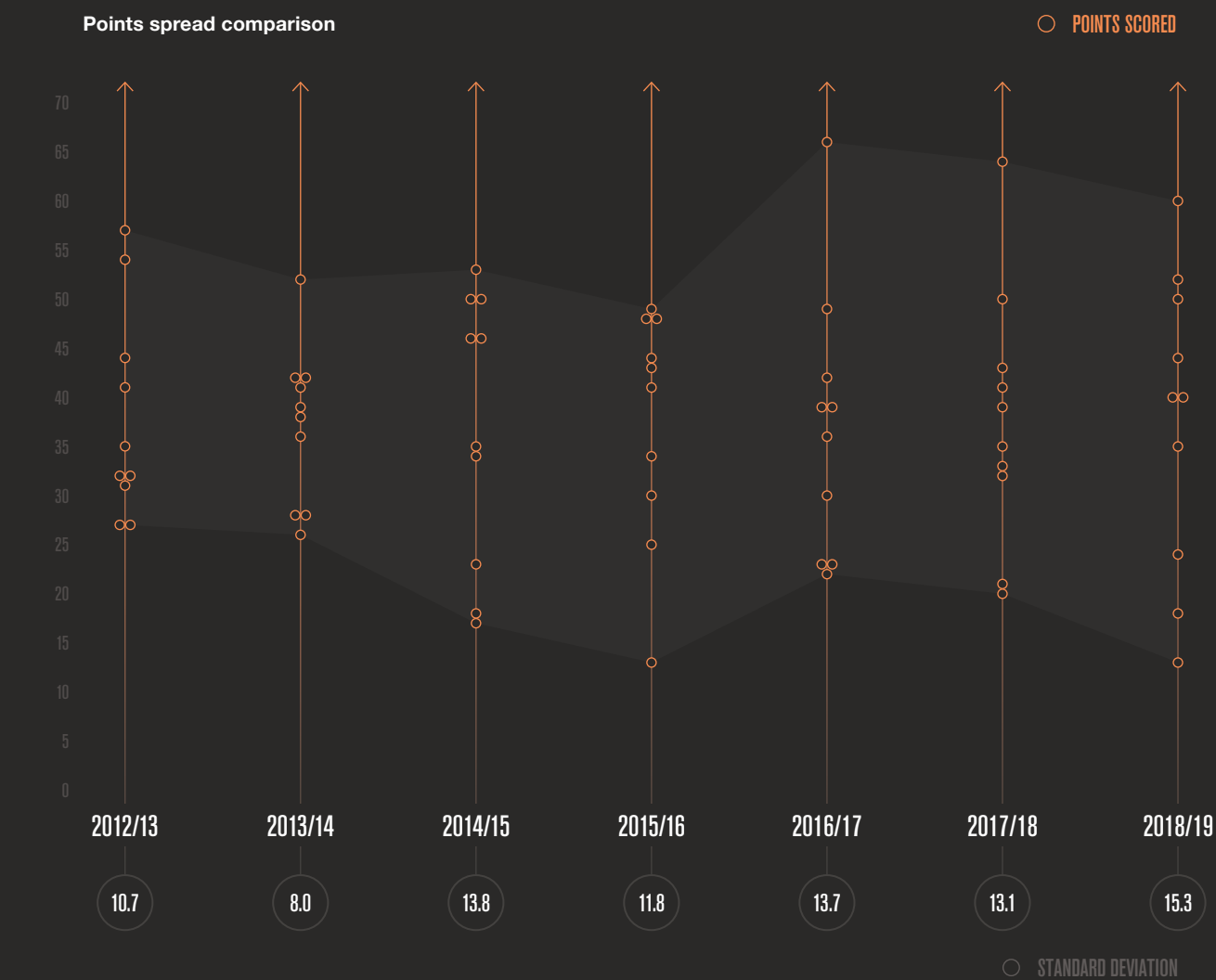
This was the fifth season in a row of declining crowds, with the average at its lowest since North Queensland Fury were in the league.

Competitive balance is at a record low by various measures:

gap from top to bottom, spread of teams, and the number of matches decided by more than one goal. This season showed that when success shifts from one team to another, so does failure, and the net gain is non-existent.

The players and clubs are joined in their desire to see these trends reversed. Improved marketing will no doubt have an immediate positive impact on the competition, but there are underlying design questions to be resolved if an upturn is to be sustainable in the longer term.

# COMPETITIVE BALANCE



Competitive balance has continued to decline in the A-League on almost any measure. In the period with the current ten clubs we have never experienced a less even competition across the season or within matches.

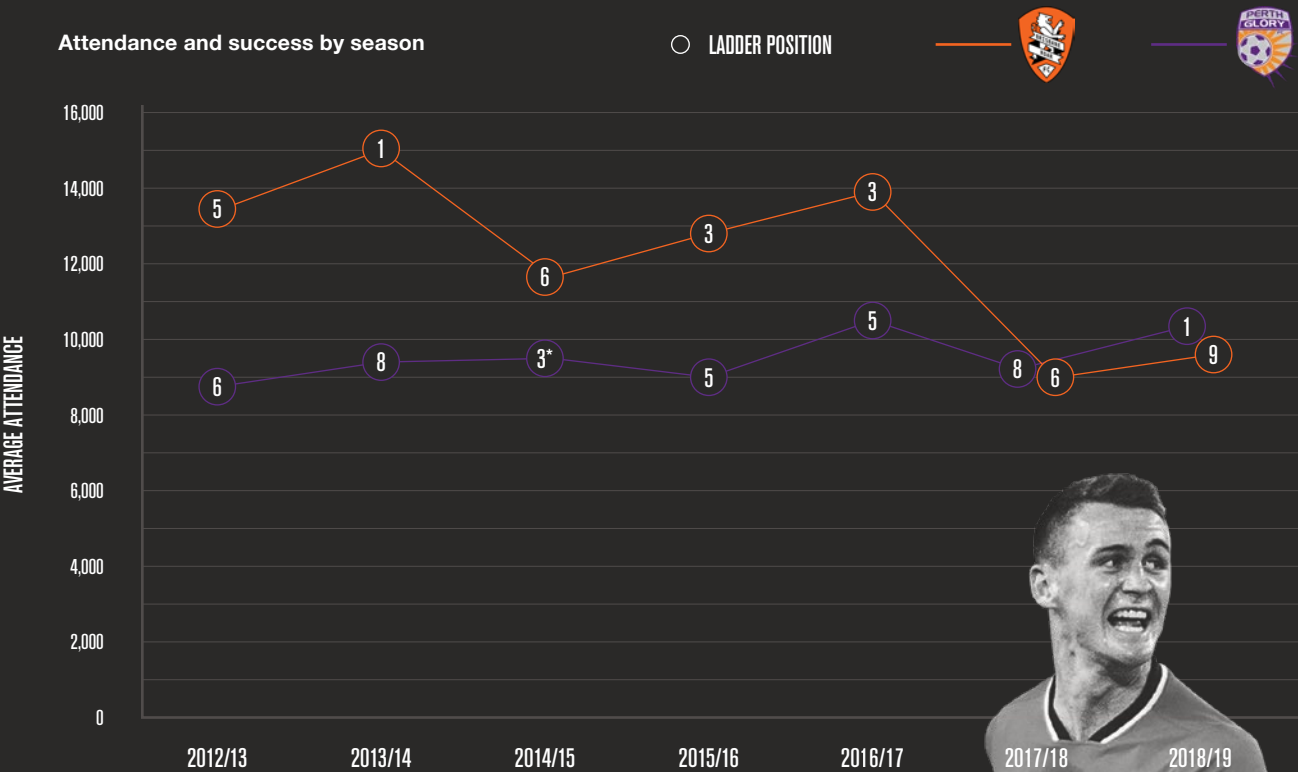
The gap between the first and last placed teams on the ladder opened to a record 47 points, and the standard deviation of points totals grew to a new high of 15.3. A record 43% of matches were decided by two or more goals.

This season did feature some (limited) variation to the regular pecking order which had established itself. For example, Perth's rise to the Premiership marked their only top four finish in the period with the current ten clubs, while Brisbane missed the finals for the first time since 2009/10.

A theoretical benefit of the salary cap is supposed to be that success is shared around the different clubs in different years, thus increasing interest across the board. But the rise and fall of Perth and Brisbane – teams from similarly-sized, one-club markets – provides an insight into how this plays out in practice.

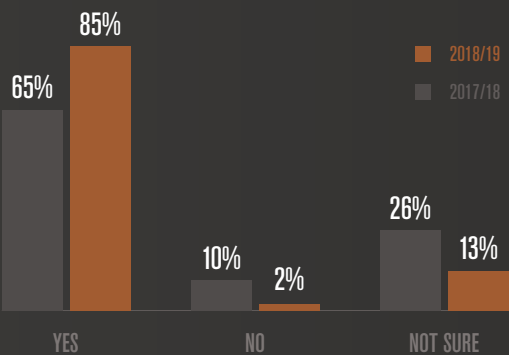
We see that for each team, average crowds correlate strongly with success. Other factors are at play, but crowds generally rise and fall with ladder position, especially in Brisbane. So for the performance of the league as a whole, the impact is zero-sum at best. Support is not grown in the aggregate – it is simply moved around.

Attendance and success by season



\*Demoted to 7th at end of season due to salary cap breach

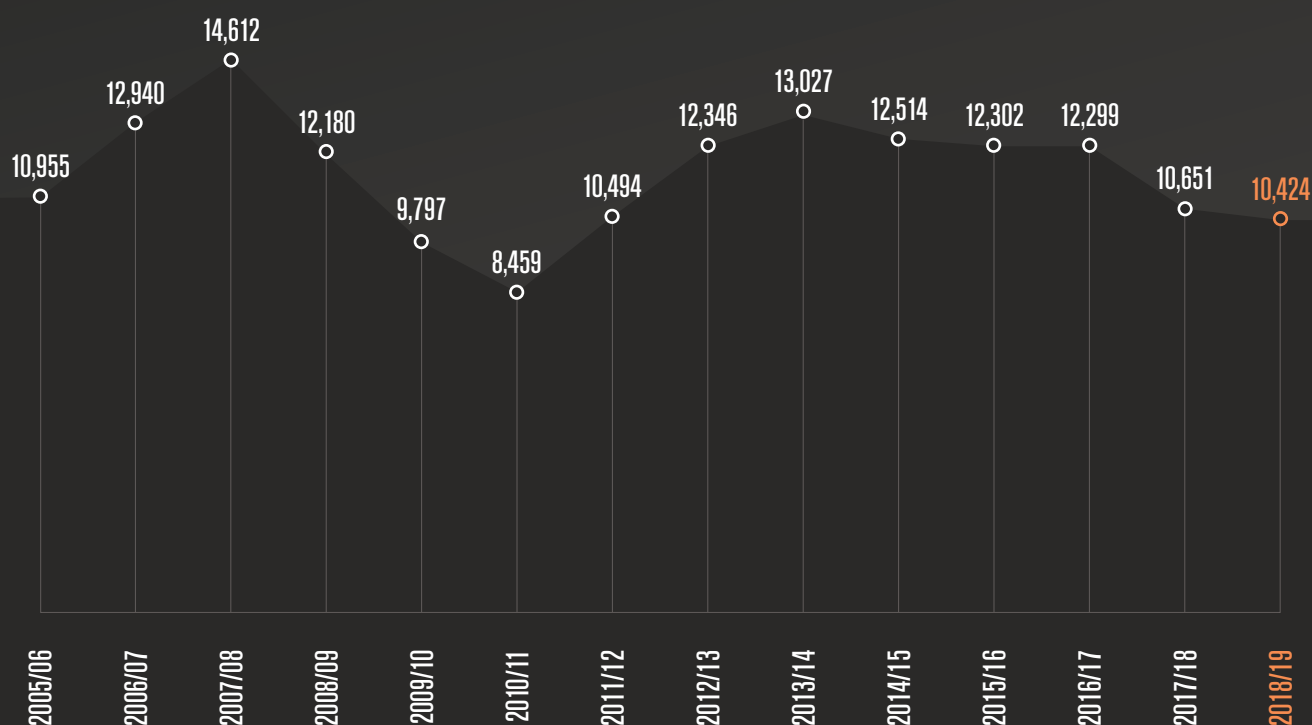
Do you think the A-League salary cap should be abolished?





# ATTENDANCE

A-League average crowds by season



2018/19 average crowds by club





## Top ten crowds 2018/19

Regular seasons only

- 1 **40,504**  
**MELBOURNE VICTORY V MELBOURNE CITY**  
Marvel Stadium (Round 1)
- 2 **32,431**  
**MELBOURNE VICTORY V MELBOURNE CITY**  
Marvel Stadium (Round 20)
- 3 **30,588**  
**SYDNEY FC V WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS**  
Sydney Cricket Ground (Round 2)
- 4 **25,071**  
**MELBOURNE VICTORY V PERTH GLORY**  
AAMI Park (Round 18)
- 5 **24,306**  
**MELBOURNE CITY V MELBOURNE VICTORY**  
AAMI Park (Round 9)
- 6 **23,648**  
**WELLINGTON PHOENIX V MELBOURNE VICTORY**  
Eden Park (Round 19)
- 7 **21,984**  
**WESTERN SYDNEY WANDERERS V SYDNEY FC**  
ANZ Stadium (Round 25)
- 8 **21,085**  
**MELBOURNE VICTORY V SYDNEY FC**  
AAMI Park (Round 16)
- 9 **20,629**  
**MELBOURNE VICTORY V ADELAIDE UNITED**  
Marvel Stadium (Round 7)
- 10 **20,066**  
**MELBOURNE VICTORY V WELLINGTON PHOENIX**  
AAMI Park (Round 10)

The Grand Final crowd of 56,371 at Optus Stadium in Perth was the second highest in A-League history, only behind the 61,880 who attended the Sydney derby at ANZ Stadium in Round 1 of the 2016/17 season.

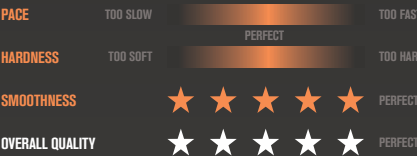
This finale marked a positive end to another worrying season for crowds, with 2018/19 marking the fifth season in a row in which average attendance declined year-on-year.



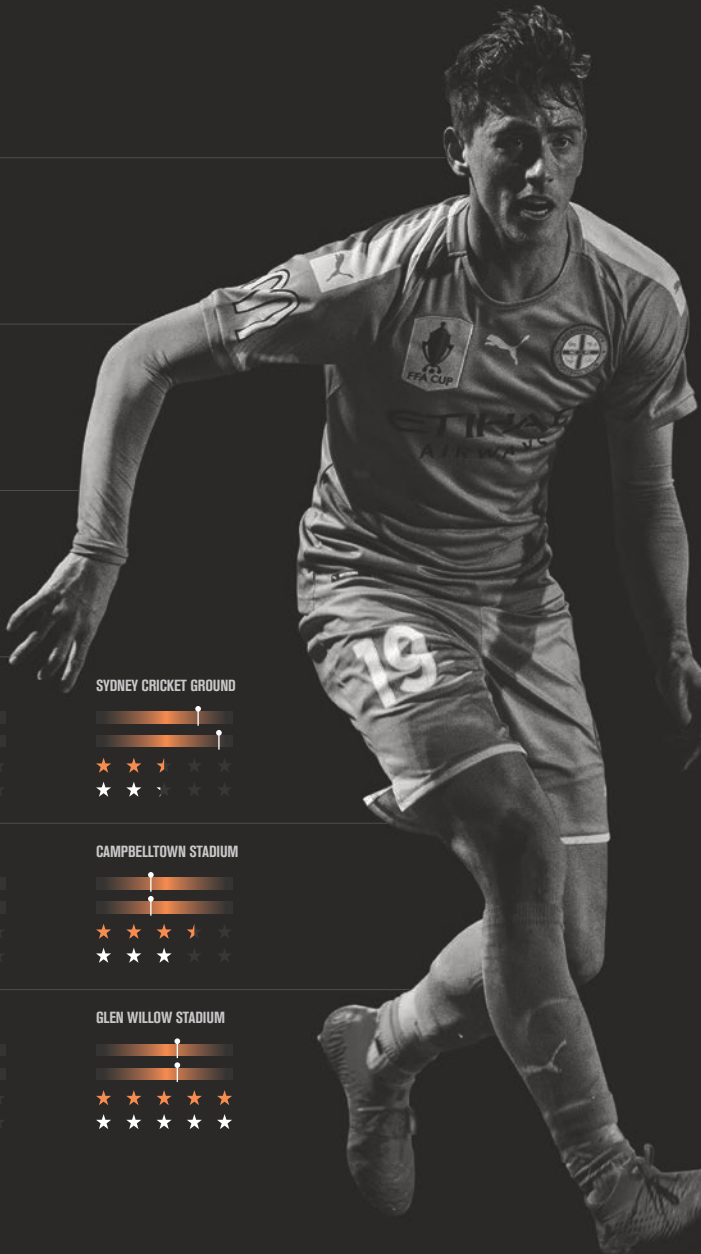
# PITCH RATINGS

The PFA A-League Pitch Ratings are voted on by selected away team players at the end of each match. Players rate the pitch on four measures: pace, hardness, smoothness and overall quality. Pace and hardness are measured on a scale where the ideal or 'goldilocks' score is in the middle, while smoothness and overall quality are simply scored out of five.

### PITCH RATING KEY



	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	COOPERS STADIUM    	 <p>PITCH RATING KEY</p> <p>PACE TOO SLOW</p> <p>HARDNESS TOO SOFT</p> <p>SMOOTHNESS</p> <p>OVERALL QUALITY</p>	
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	SUNCORP STADIUM    		
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	CENTRAL COAST STADIUM    		
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	AAMI PARK    		
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	MARVEL STADIUM    		
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	MCDONALD JONES STADIUM    		
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	HBF PARK    		
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	JUBILEE STADIUM    	LEIGHARDT OVAL    	SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND    
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	WESTPAC STADIUM    	EDEN PARK    	CAMPBELLTOWN STADIUM    
	PACE HARDNESS SMOOTHNESS OVERALL QUALITY	ANZ STADIUM    	SPOTLESS STADIUM    	GLEN WILLOW STADIUM    



# ATMOSPHERE

Scores out of 5



COOPERS STADIUM

3.87



SUNCORP STADIUM

2.47



CENTRAL COAST STADIUM

2.08



AAMI PARK

2.64



AAMI PARK

4.50

MARVEL STADIUM

4.43



MCDONALD JONES STADIUM

3.00



HBF PARK

3.54



JUBILEE STADIUM

3.11

LEICHHARDT OVAL

2.50

SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND

2.25



WESTPAC STADIUM

2.44

EDEN PARK

4.00

CAMBELLTOWN STADIUM

2.50



SPOTLESS STADIUM

1.33

ANZ STADIUM

2.25

GLEN WILLOW STADIUM

3.00





# TECHNICAL REPORT



# SNAPSHOT

5%

Matches ending goalless

3.01

Goals per game

896

Passes per match

3.98

Yellow cards per match

3.2 OUT OF 5



Average rating of referees  
getting big decisions right

Many of the attributes which define the A-League remained consistent in 2018/19, such as high-scoring, action-packed matches and a relative balance across the teams in terms of the share of possession kept by each.

The A-League became more free flowing in 2018/19, with an increase from 855 to 896 passes per match, in line with a decrease in the number of fouls, tackles and interceptions.

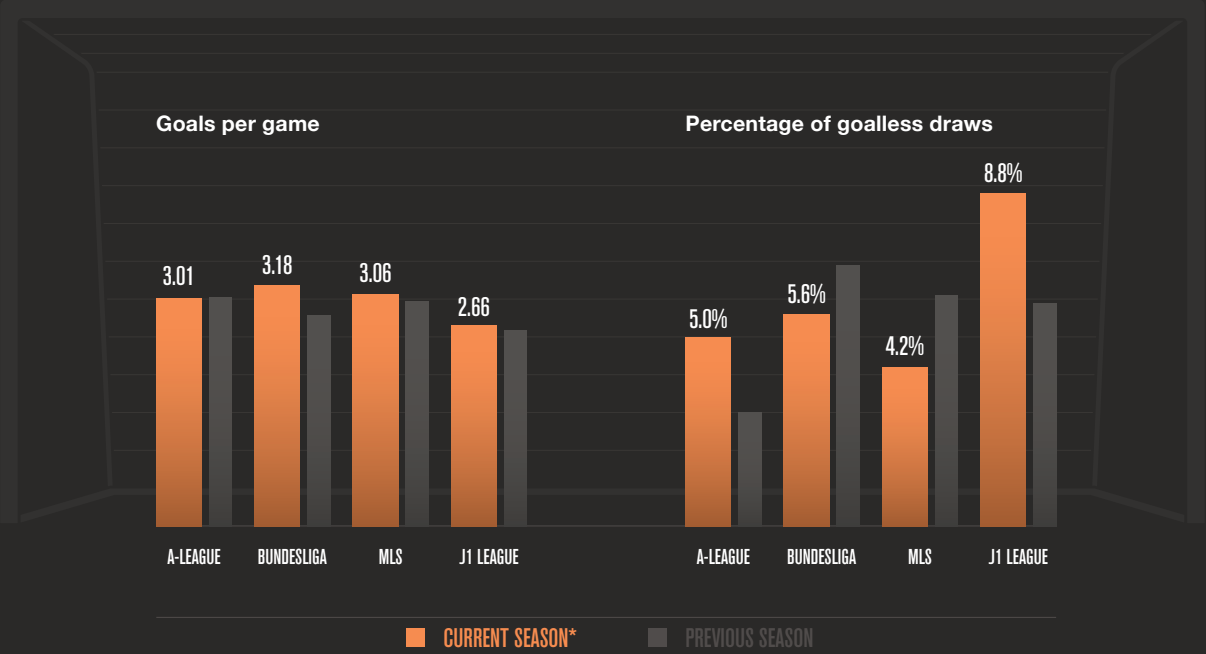
The international comparison leagues – J1 League 2018, German Bundesliga 2018/19 and Major League Soccer 2018 – all joined the A-League in increasing the number of shots

per match. Those leagues all witnessed more goals, with the Bundesliga and MLS eclipsing the A-League for goals per match, bumping it from the top ranking on that metric last season.

The Technical Report helps identify such trends not only within the A-League but across the broader football spectrum, reflecting the globalised nature of football tactics.

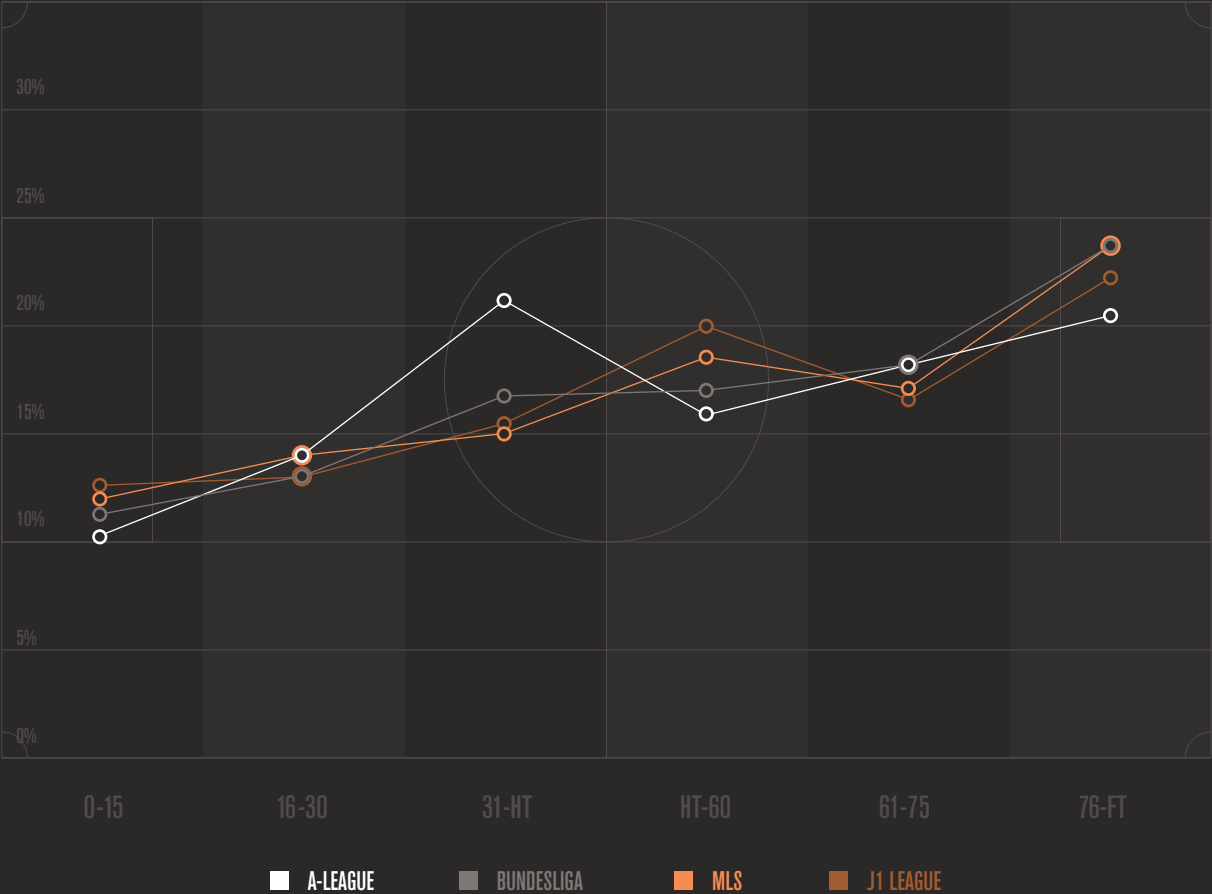
The A-League remains distinct in terms of refereeing, with more fouls, penalties, yellow cards, red cards and offsides per match than the comparison leagues.

# GOALS

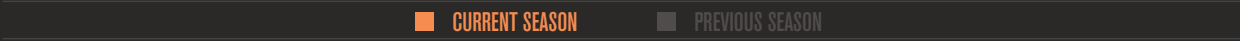


\*Current Season refers to the 2018/19 A-League and Bundesliga seasons and the 2018 MLS and J-League seasons

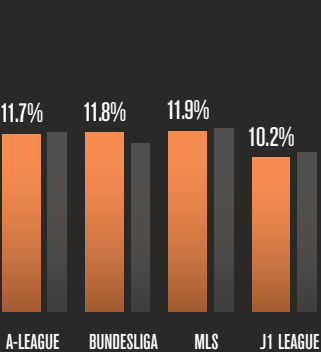
## Scoring breakdown by minute



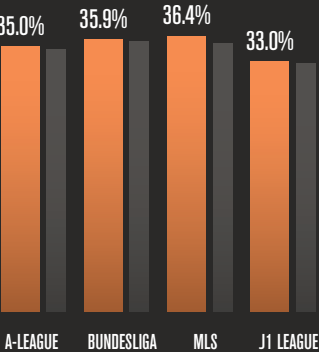
# CREATION



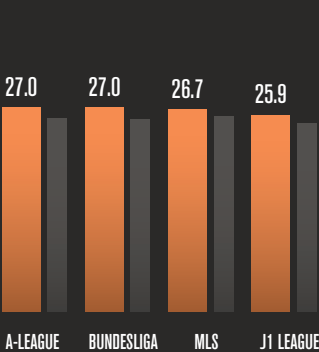
Percentage of shots converted



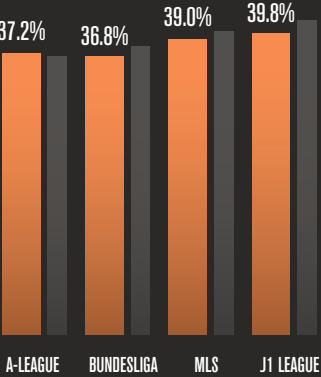
Percentage of shots on target



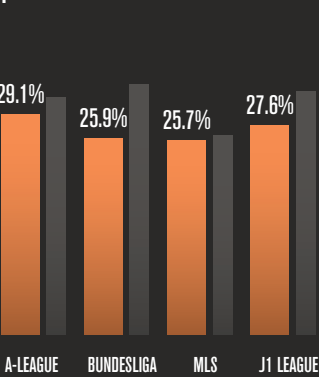
Total shots per game



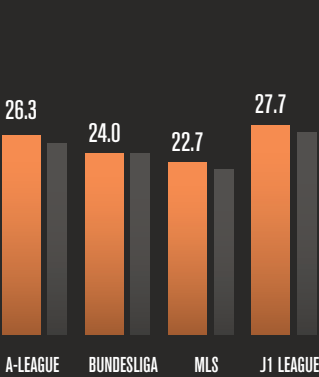
Percentage of shots from outside the area



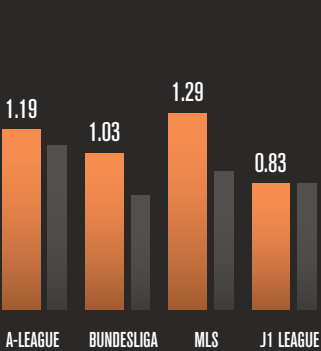
Percentage of goals from set pieces



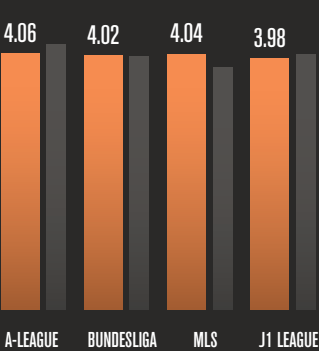
Open play crosses per match



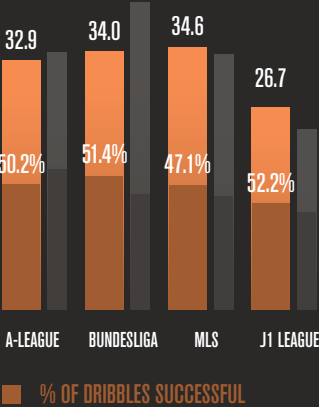
Through balls per match



Offsides per match



Dribbles per match





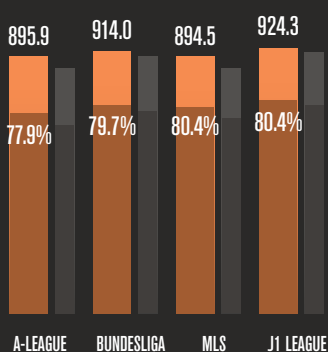
# PASSING



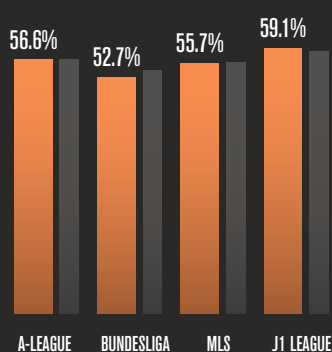
■ CURRENT SEASON

■ PREVIOUS SEASON

Passes per match

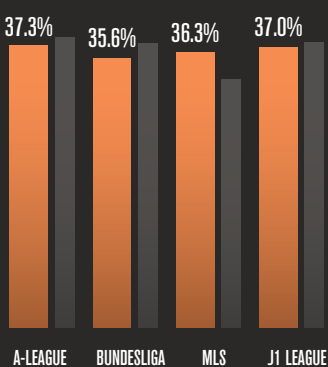


Percentage of passes in attacking half

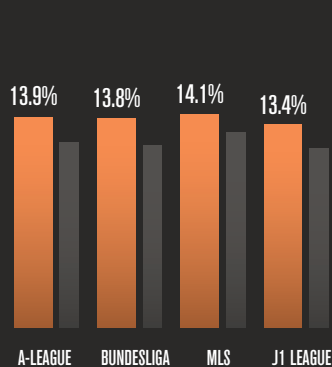


■ % OF PASSES COMPLETED

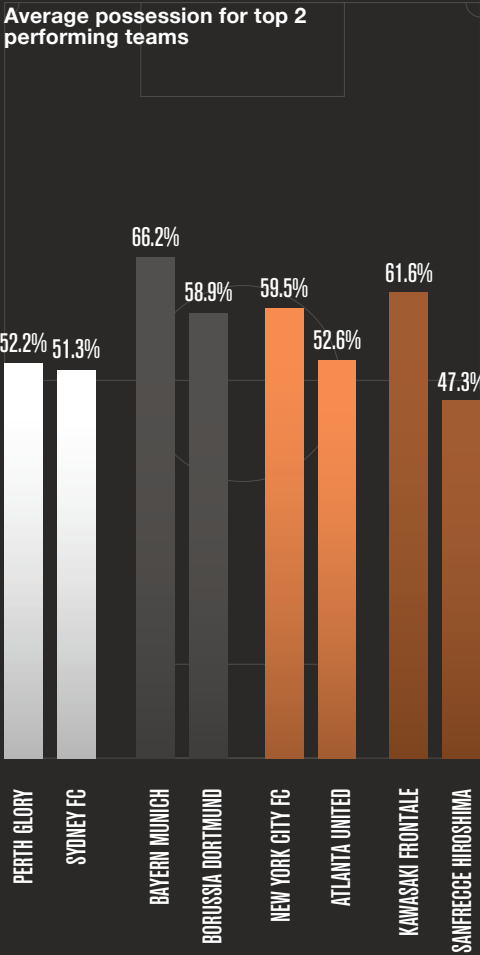
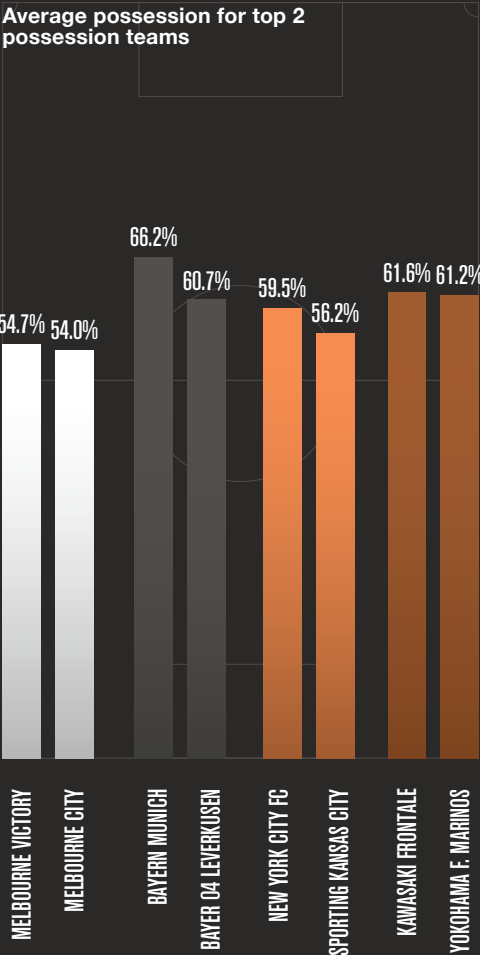
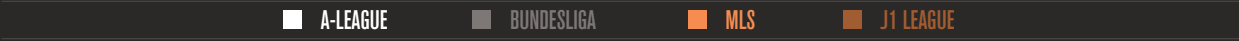
Percentage of passes forward



Percentage of passes long



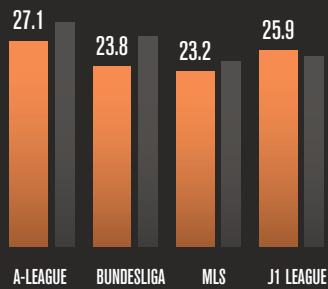
# POSSESSION



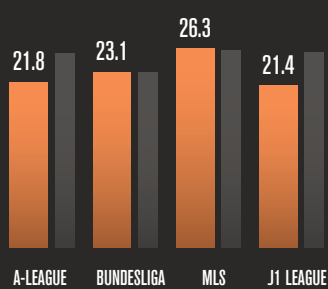
# DEFENDING

CURRENT SEASON PREVIOUS SEASON

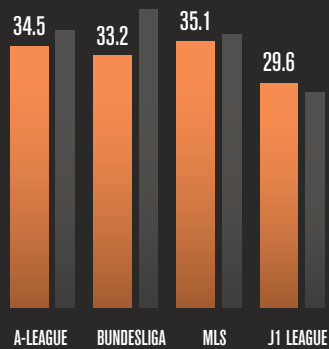
Fouls per match



Interceptions per match



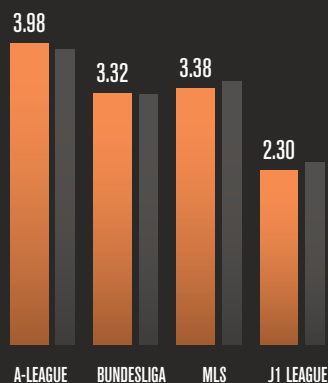
Tackles per match



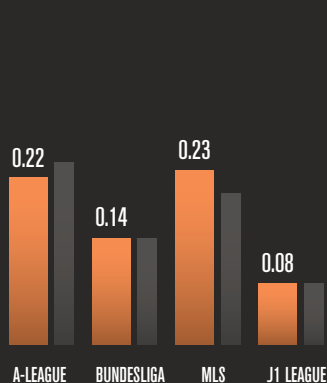
# REFEREEING

■ CURRENT SEASON ■ PREVIOUS SEASON

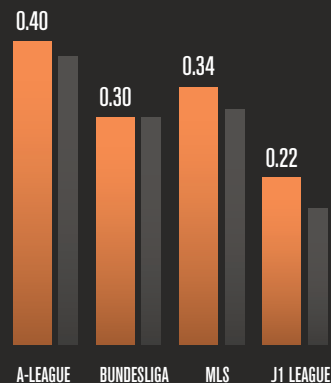
Yellow cards per match



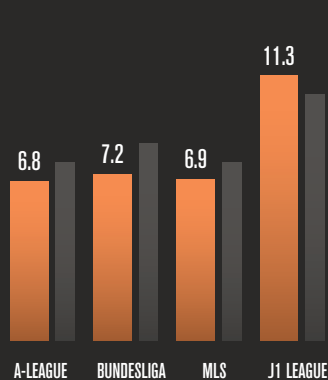
Red cards per match



Penalties per match



Fouls per yellow card



Referee assessment (from the PFA's post-match player surveys):

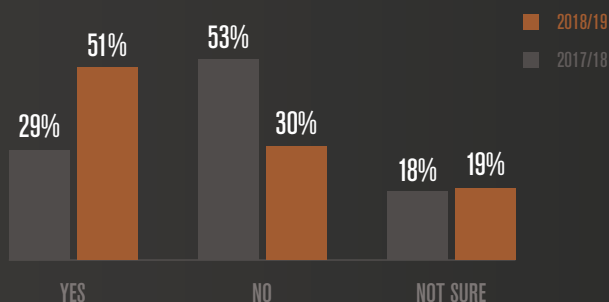
Getting the big decisions right: **3.2** (-0.1)  
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Protecting player safety: **3.6** (+0.1)  
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Communication with players: **3.1** (=)  
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Implementing VAR: **2.9**  
★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Do you think the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) should continue to be used in the A-League?

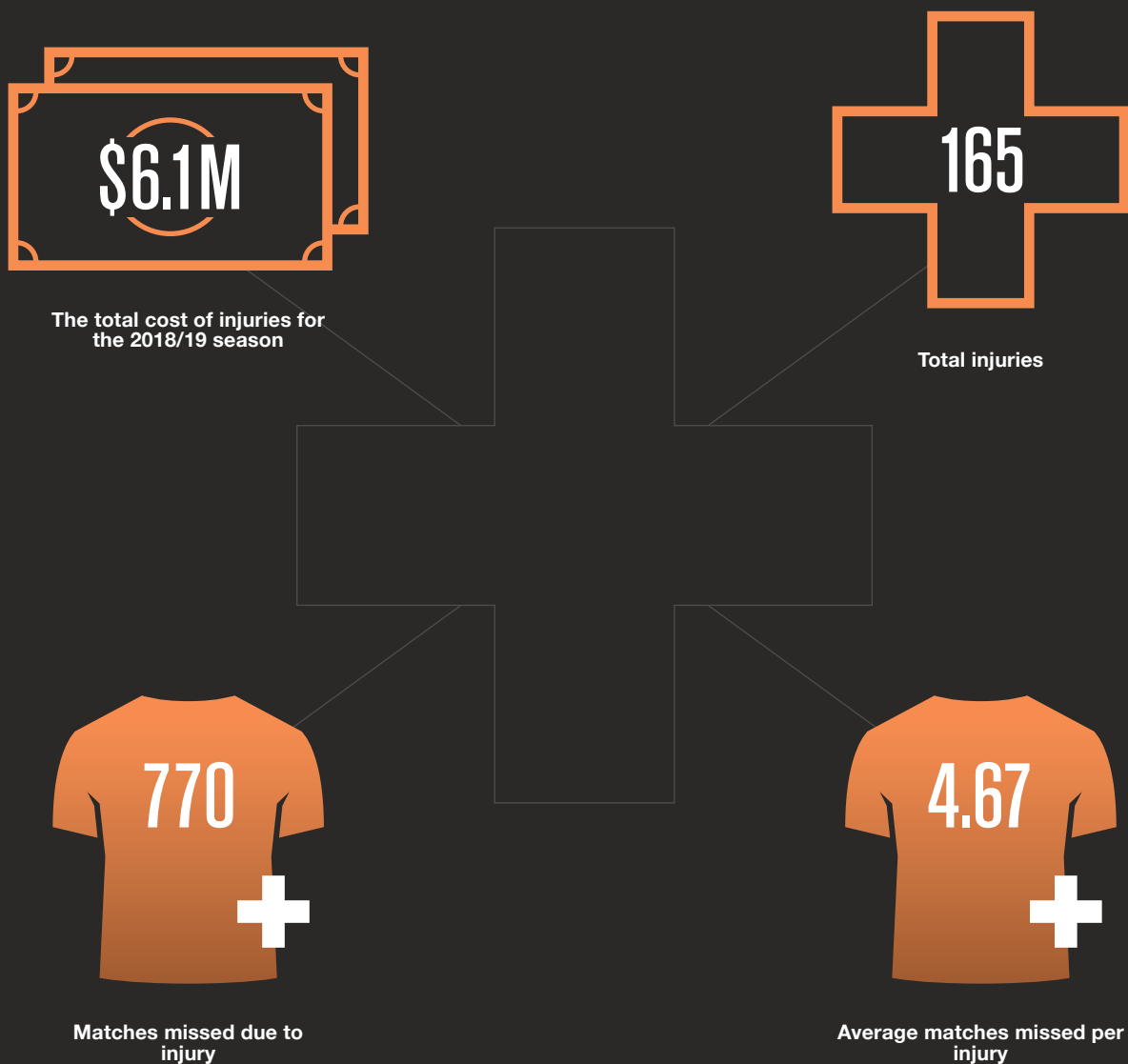






# INJURY REPORT

# SNAPSHOT



Since 2005, the PFA's A-League Injury Report has been a fundamental tool in the PFA's efforts to ensure the health and safety of our members. The Report has underpinned the PFA's advocacy for fairer scheduling, safer playing surfaces and improved conditions at clubs, headlined by the introduction of the Minimum Medical Standards in 2011.

This season was by far the worst for injuries in the era with the current ten clubs. The 165 injuries was the highest since 2011/12 and the 770 matches missed due to injury was the highest since 2010/11.

This increase saw the cost of injuries rise to a record \$6.1 million, up from \$5.3 million in 2017/18.

Wellington Phoenix had an excellent season in regards to injury management, with by far the fewest injuries (8) and matches missed (18).

Knee injuries were responsible for 241 of the matches missed, 74 more than in the 2017/18 season. More matches were also missed this season due to calf, thigh and foot injuries, although quad, hamstring and ankle problems cost players fewer games.

# METHODOLOGY

During the 2018/19 A-League season (excluding finals), the PFA collected and recorded the occurrence and location of all injuries causing players to miss matches.

The PFA A-League Injury Report was formulated from publicly available information and private feedback, specifically through the following key sources:



**FFA weekly match previews**



**Official A-League club match previews/reviews**



**Official media releases**



**Official websites**



**Direct communication with A-League players**

In this report, injury is defined as “any physical complaint sustained during a competitive game or training that resulted in a player being unable to take part in, at a minimum, the player’s next official A-League game”. Based on the data collected about injury occurrence and related games missed, descriptive analyses were conducted.

## Cost of injuries

Cost of injuries is defined as the average wage spend on players unavailable to participate in matches due to injury. It is calculated by dividing the total player payments at each club by 432 (16 players x 27 rounds) to find the average cost to that club of each match missed due to injury, then multiplying by the recorded number of matches missed. Finals, Champions League and FFA Cup matches are not included, nor are payments to marquee and guest players; so the true cost is likely much higher.

The accuracy of the PFA A-League Injury Report’s results and analysis is dependent upon the accuracy of the sources of information from which it is derived. Accordingly, the PFA does not warrant that the results are an exact and complete record of player injuries. They are, however, an accurate summation of the publicly available information provided by FFA and club sources. This report does not include injuries players received while playing for the Australian Men’s National Team.



# 2018/19 INJURY OVERVIEW

■ 2018/19 ■ 2017/18 ■ 2016/17

## Number of injuries



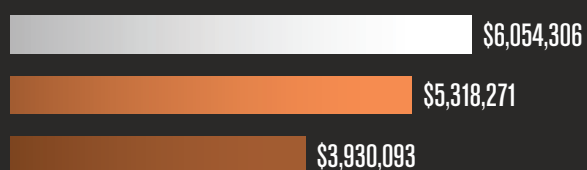
## Matches missed per injury

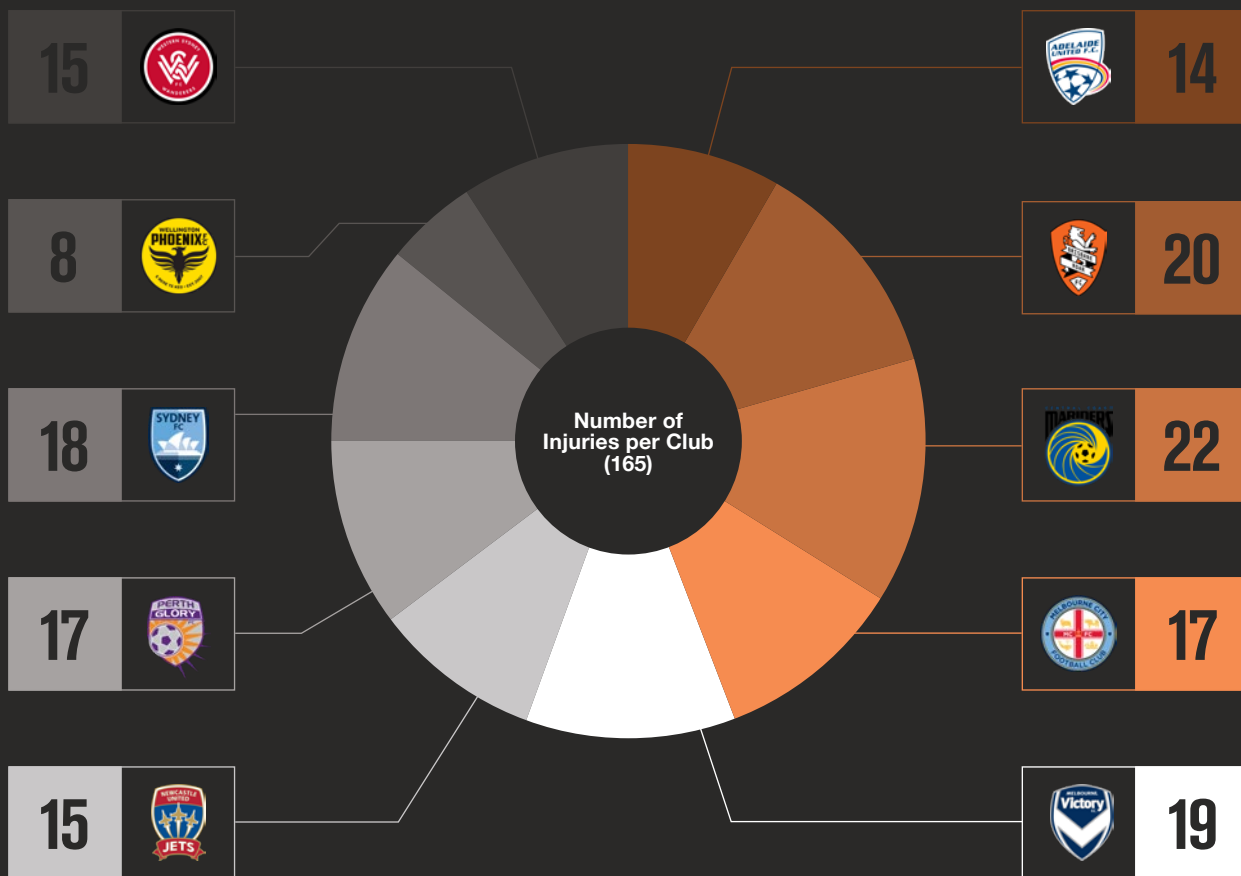


## Total matches missed

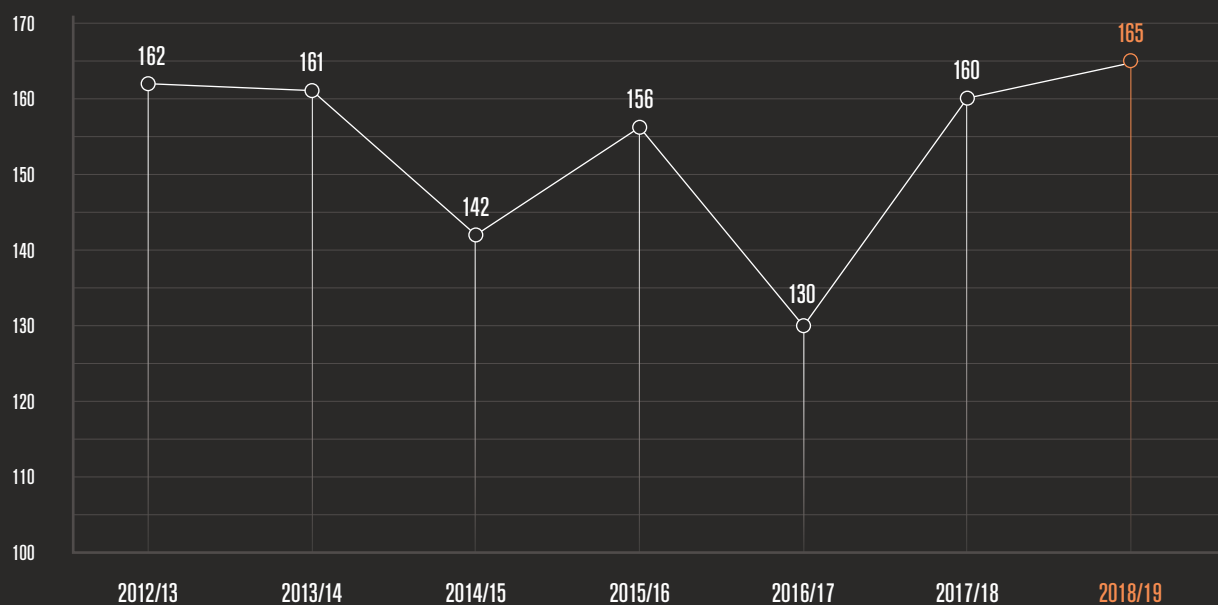


## Total cost of injuries

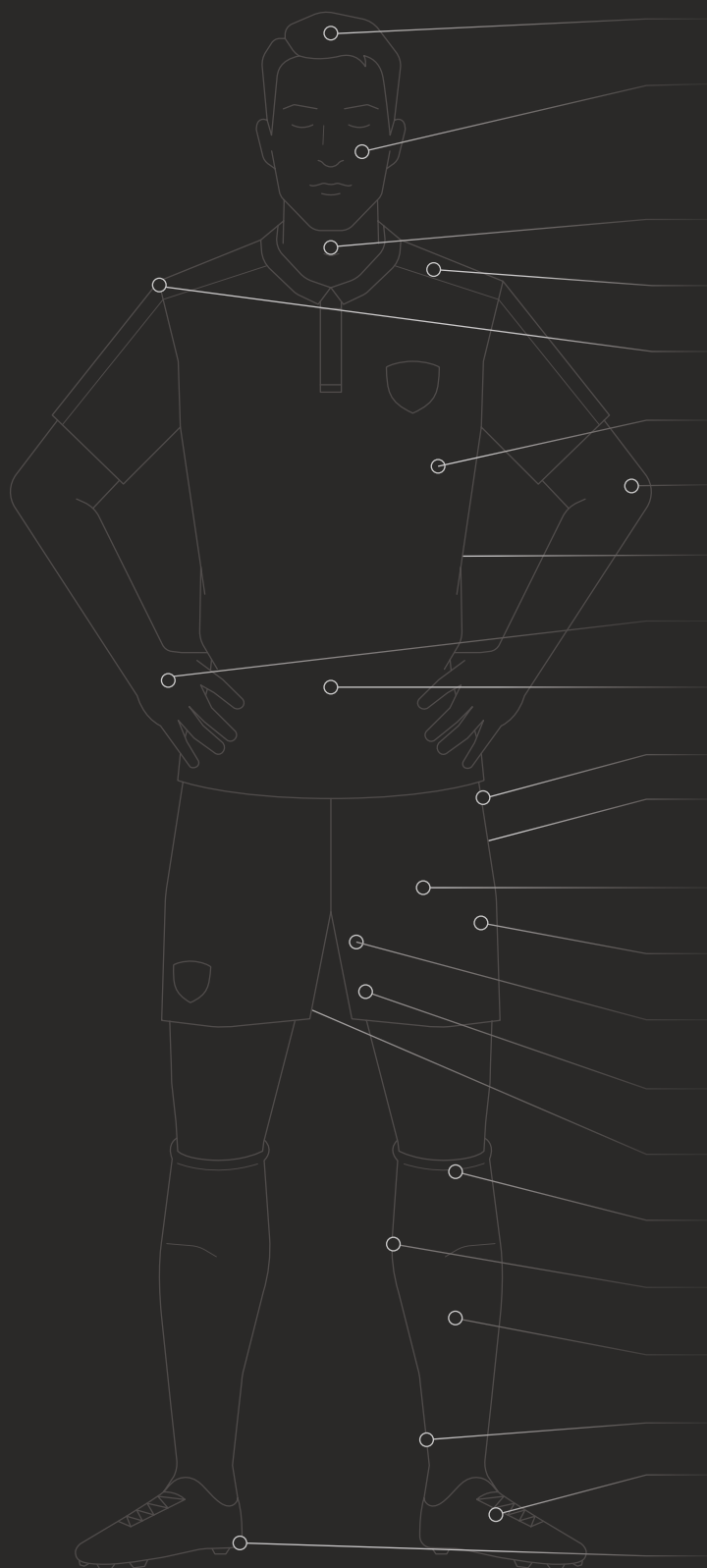




Number of injuries by season



# LOCATION OF INJURIES



	NUMBER OF INJURIES	MATCHES MISSED	CHANGE FROM 2017/18
CONCUSSION	2	2	+1
FACIAL INJURY	1	1	+1
GENERAL SORENESS	6	7	+7
ILLNESS	11	27	+18
COLLAR BONE	1	7	-4
SHOULDER	3	5	-16
RIBS	0	0	-4
ELBOW	1	2	+2
BACK	0	0	-8
HAND	0	0	-23
ABDOMINAL	1	3	+3
HIP	4	13	+11
GLUTE	1	5	+5
QUAD	6	41	-31
THIGH	3	17	+17
GROIN	13	56	-4
ADDUCTOR	1	3	-1
HAMSTRING	29	114	-16
KNEE	30	241	+74
CALF	9	69	+25
LEG	4	21	+7
ANKLE	13	43	-60
FOOT	11	61	+18
HEEL	1	1	+1
UNSTATED	14	31	+26



# PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

# PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT BY A-LEAGUE PLAYERS

## Education Grants



176

## Psychological Support Consultations



101

## Skin Cancer Checks



203

## Coaching Courses, C/B Licence



58

## Beyond the 90 Work Placements



10

## Highlights Packages



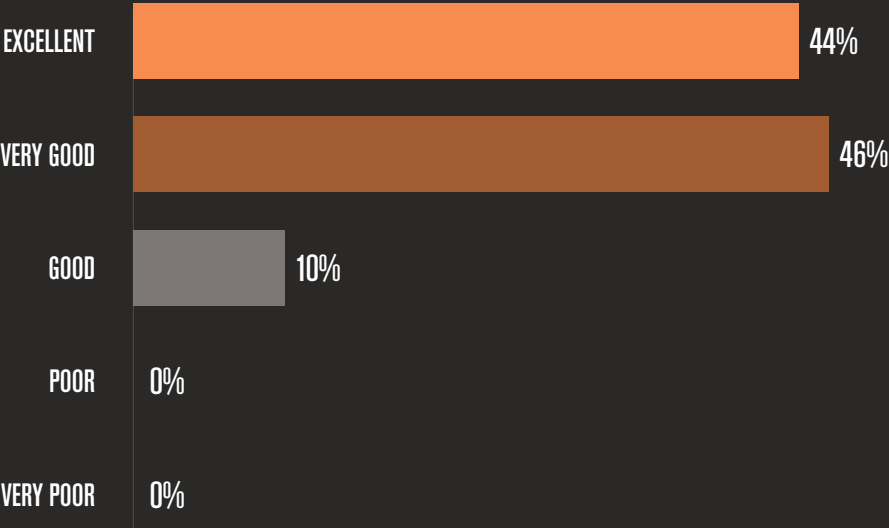
34

## Scholarships

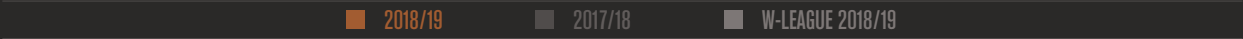


**CHRIS NAUMOFF** (PFA FOOTBALL SCHOLARSHIP)

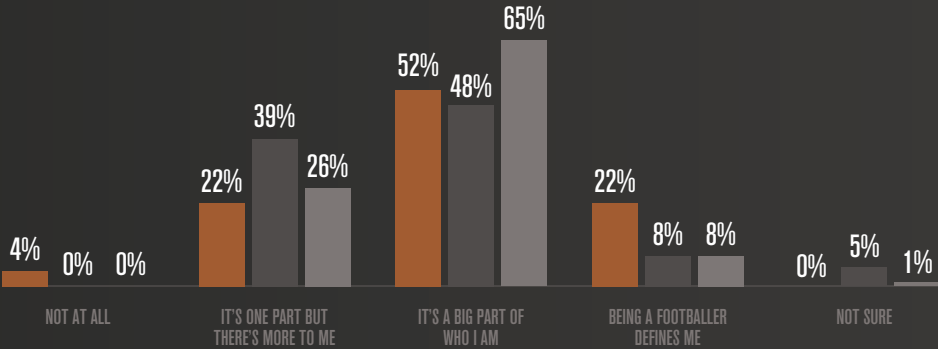
Which best describes your overall perception of the PFA Player Development Program?



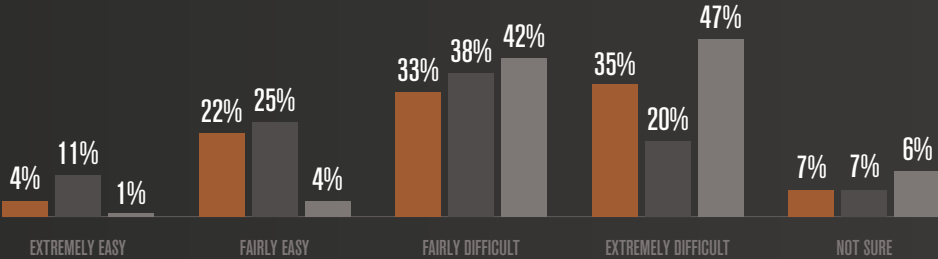
# IDENTITY



To what extent is being a footballer part of your 'personal identity'?



How hard would you find it to give up that identity if you stopped playing tomorrow?

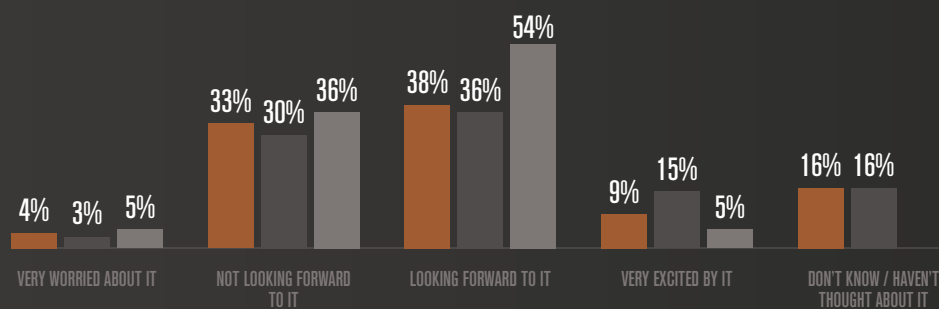


# TRANSITION

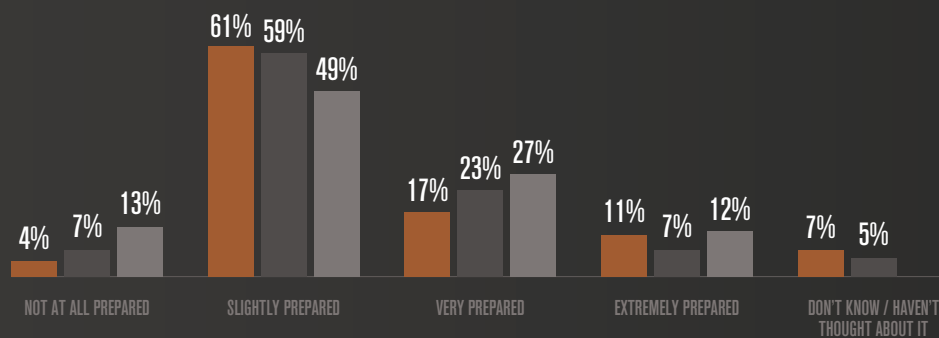
■ 2018/19 ■ 2017/18 ■ W-LEAGUE 2018/19



What describes your general feelings about life after football?



How prepared generally do you feel for life after football?





**Courage**  
**World Class**  
**Intelligence**  
**Trust**  
**Respect**



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