

Mayfield United Senior Football Club – 1st Grade 2021 Season Review

What a season 2021 was for the 1st grade squad at Mayfield. After winning back to back premierships in 2018 and 2019, and having their chance at a 3rd peat cruel taken away from them by the beast that is Covid-19, the Mayfield ZPL squad was eager to get the season underway.

There was somewhat a changing of the guard at Mayfield in 2021, a few stalwarts from the prior premiership seasons not returning or had left the area. Fortunately, some mates of the existing squad decided to take a punt on Mayfield, this meant the average age of the 1st grade squad went from early 30's in 2019 to early 20's in 2021, could the new young guys re-energise the squad and bring success in 2021?

The Mayfield 2021 1st grade squad was written off in pre-season by people in the know in the ZPL. Dads army, the 3rd rate ZPL tigers, the long ball specialists, lucky to finish as high as 8th were all thrown at the squad, but like typical Mayfield Tigers, backs to the wall is when we thrive!

April

The season got off to a difficult start, the 1st round was against Cooks Hill, in a tight game with limited chances for both sides, a draw was a fair result. A special mention to new 1st grade goalkeeper Mitch Metcalfe, who pulling off an unbelievable point black save off the last kick of the game, to keep the scores locked. A hard fought 0-0 draw

2nd round we headed to Cardiff to take on the 2020 ZPL premiers, the 1st grade lads were desperately looking for something to kick start their season. Up stepped one of Mayfield's most senior players and Mayfield's Mr Nice Guy, Aaron Thompson, who delivers a goal for the ages, an absolute rocket from 35 yards out that was hit like a tracer bullet in to the top corner, no deviation, no swerve, just dead straight, the keeper did not move just watched in awe of the strike. A goal that anyone at the ground will remember for a long time! A further penalty was converted by Sam Jenkins to make it 2-0. A lovely chip finish was the icing on the cake from Mayfield's new 'left back' Dan Harvey, a left winger in the previous premiership years, had taken to his new role of fullback like a duck to water. He played some of his best football for Mayfield in the 2021 season! Mayfield 3 -0.

This result kicked started the 1st grade's season and it was no surprise it was 3 of the 'old guard' who delivered the goals when the squad was looking for that something special.

May

Round 3 and Mayfield welcomed their arch nemesis in Kotara South to Mayfield Park, the squad eager for redemption having been dump out of the semis in 2018 and 2019 by the Tigers from Kotara.

Kotara went down a man early but like all Kotara squads they fought to the final whistle but in the end the exciting new striking partnership of Harry Taylor and Jack Diebold would each net a goal and show the Mayfield crowd exactly why the coaching staff knew that had something special up top in 2021. Mayfield 2-0

4th round we travelled to the Hexham swamp to take on Hamilton Azzurri, the game was a very dour draw, with limited chances for both sides, the less said about this game the better! Boring 0-0 draw

Round 5 saw Beresfield travel to Mayfield Park, Beresfield similar to Mayfield had been written off for the 2021 ZPL season, however they had a point to prove and in the week before playing Mayfield they knocked off the previous unbeaten Dudley. Mayfield knew they were up against a determined Beresfield squad. 2 penalties and a smashing finishing from 30cm's out by Jack Diebold would see Mayfield prevail 3-1 in a very tight and tough game.

Round 6 saw Mayfield travel to Warners Bay in what promised to be a fiery contest with a friendly rivalry brewing between the clubs. Mayfield did themselves no favours going down 2-0 by around the 60th minute! However, super sub Tim Senkalski would step up and turn the game completely on its head, 1st tucking away a goal within minutes of entering the field to reinvigorate the squad, next up he put one on a plate for Jack to even the game up a 2-2 with 15 minutes to go, the 1st grade squad was coming home with a wet sail. 5 minutes to go Josh 'get to the byline' Barden drove to the byline and cut back, to yep you guessed it, the man of the moment Tim Senkalski who rifled a finish into the top corner Mayfield had turned the game around and Scott Gunster could finally tell the crowd he did actually know!! Brilliant comeback win 3-2! The young squad never gave up or got their heads down. A special shoutout to Josh Pattinson who was that desperate to play against his former side he would get through 60 minutes with a busted ACL, what an effort, maybe not advisable but showed his character and desire to fight for the Tigers

Round 7 would see the 1st grade squad come crashing back to earth after the comeback win. The lads would lose their 1st and only game of the season to Swansea 1-0. It was a hard result to take with the boys creating some 18 chances on goal to Swansea 5 (thanks Swansea stat man for these frustrating stats). The old adage if you don't take your chances it will come back to haunt you was on show. This would prove to be a huge learning curve for the young squad, 1-0 lose

June

Looking at the ZPL draw it was evident that rounds 8 and 9 would define if the ZPL squad at Mayfield were the real deal or pretenders as they ran into the red hot squads of Dudley and Newcastle Suns. Both these clubs are traditional heavy weights in ZPL and this year was no exception

1st up was Dudley at Dudley, the challenges in ZPL do not get much harder than Dudley away. Dudley were the early season favourites who had put everyone to the sword at their home ground to begin the season. Mayfield knew they had their work cut out, they had to survive an early onslaught of what would have had to be around 8 corners, but the boys dug deep and repelled everything thrown at them. All the fighting would prove invaluable as a brilliant defence splitting pass was run onto by man mountain Jack and he calmly slots home for a 1 nil lead. It got better for Mayfield when Jack, this time turned provider, and got to the byline, cuts it back for Lachie Thomas to blast into the top corner from point blank range, his 1st goal for the club. Before a breath could be taken it was 3 nil this time with Aaron Thompson cooling finishing past the on rushing Dudley keeper. Just before halftime a Dudley goal was a sobering reminder the game wasn't yet over.

The 2nd half was a cagey affair, with Dudley getting a goal back with 20 to go, however the Mayfield boys weren't about to roll over. Harry Taylor, after absolutely terrifying the Dudley defence all day, slotted Jack through on goal, Jack making no mistake and rifling the ball home to cap a 4-2 win against the ZPL favourites on their own pitch.

Before the squad could even take a breath next up was Newcastle Suns at home in the final game of round 1. Mayfield 1st grade flew out of the blocks and before the crowd got a chance to sit down Aaron Thompson had planted a header in the bottom right hand corner to give the good guys a 1-0 lead. Mayfield continued to drive forward in search of a 2nd goal and it duly delivered as Noah

(starting his 1st and only game of the season, dam injuries) intercepted a soft back pass from a Suns defender and race towards goal, as he got dragged wide Noah was able to lay a pass off to the energetic Harry Taylor, who nailed the ball left footed into the bottom right corner, Mayfield are on fire! Just before half time the Suns striker scored an absolutely belter from 25 yards that cracked in off the underside of the bar (if you have to concede a goal this is the sort that you take your hat off too). 2-1 at halftime.

The 2nd half was a tight affair, Mayfield missed a penalty to put the result beyond doubt, only for Suns to race up Mayfield's end and blast over from 9 yards out when goal was open. Game finishes 2-1 to Mayfield and the lads have risen to top of the ladder!

Mayfield 1st grade had quickly address the question of real deal or pretenders with authority. The lads now sat top of the league looking down on the rest of the competition at the halfway point of the season!

Round 10 and redemption time for the squad against Cooks Hill, in terrible weather, Mayfield flew out of the blokes and were up 4-0 within 16 minutes, 2 goals to Aaron Thompson, a classy finish from right back come centre midfielder Josh Barden, and the a side footed finish to Jack Diebold! Harry Taylor would fire in 1 more goal before halftime to make the score 5-0. A clean sheet was demanded in the 2nd half, unfortunately a sloppy penalty would be given away and so to the clean sheet. Aaron Thompson would however step up and get his hatrick and our 6th goal of the day. Mayfield 6-1.

Round 11, Wayne Bull Day! The biggest day of the season for the whole of the Mayfield club, all the Mayfield teams had shown up to support the club. Mayfield struggled to get into the game for the 1st 20 minutes, however against the run of play, Mayfield went up 1-0 with a classy finish from Captain fantastic Gavin Hardwick. Cardiff would dominant the rest of the 1st half and would finally get a deserved goal just before half time.

Stern words were had a halftime and the squad came out firing in the 2nd half, Jack Diebold grabbed a goal to see Mayfield go up 2-1. Mayfield were well on top in the 2nd half but couldn't find the finishing touch despite many good chances. The crowd was getting edgy and rightly so as Cardiff would grab a goal at the death to earn a draw that their 1st half probably deserved! Draw 2-2. A special mention to Lachlan Hill a late inclusion to the starting line-up just hours before the game. He pulled out his best game for Mayfield and this would be a turning point that would see Lachlan take his performances to another level in the remaining games of the season. Who would have thought asking him to play injured would bring the best out of him!

July

Round 12 would see the squad travel to Kotara South and in a game of 2 halves, Mayfield would dominate the 1st half but fail to find the back of the net. Mayfield took the foot off the gas in the 2nd half with Kotara scoring early and continuing to apply the pressure to Mayfield's goal. But as was becoming a familiar theme for the season, Tim Senkalski would step off the bench again and drag Mayfield back into the game with a cool headed finish. Game finished 1-1.

Round 13 against Hamilton Azzurri, abandoned at halftime at 0-0. Replay to come

Round 14 would see the squad travel to Beresfield and play on the postage stamp, never an easy ground to play on being so narrow and short. But the lads adjusted and came away with a solid 3-1 win. Goals to that man again Tim Senkalski, a classy volley to Gavin Hardwick and a long await goal

to Scott Gunster. Scott had done everything but score a goal in the game's leading up to this fixture, the goal was a relief for many. Don't forget you owe Tim a beer for putting it on a plate Scotty!

August

With the season beginning to wind down and the business end of the season fast approaching things within the ZPL squad were getting challenging. Some 25 players had played 1st grade (out of a squad of 42) and 1st grade was set to play 3 games in 7 days.

After a difficult July period with 2 draws and goals drying up these 3 games in 7 days were potentially season defining. The 1st grade coach had identified this as a time to step up and a '9 point week' was being demanded, would the squad step up and deliver was the question?

1st up in the 9 point week was Warners Bay, the game wasn't one for the purest but Mayfield got the job down with a 2-0 victory (special mentioned to Dunnill for his game settling goal off the bench a great curling finishing).

Next up 3 days later was Hamilton Azzurri at Mayfield Park in a rain deferred round 13 fixture. Anyone who watched the round 13 abandon fixture would agree Azzurri had the better of the game but the Mayfield lads dug deep and repelled everything thrown at them! So question was what would Mayfield do in the replay to combat Azzurri? A tweak to the formation and Mayfield were now the dominant side in the replay game, posts were hit, Azzurri goalkeeper on fire, it wasn't looking like it would be Mayfield's night until the ever reliable Sam Jenkins stoops into with a headed finish, a deserved goal for Mayfield's no nonsense defender Sammy J! Mayfield a much deserved 1-0 win! 6 points in the bag 1 game to go to get the 9 point week that was demanded!

Mayfield lads travelled to Swansea who were sitting in 4th and the only team to have beaten them all year. Mayfield with a much changed side due to injuries and suspensions from a big week started brightly and before you could blink the lads were up 3-0 and putting on a tactical masterclass. Scott Gunster was having an absolute blinder, scoring 2, and had Swansea chasing shadows for the majority of the game! Game finished 5-1 to Mayfield, 9 point week achieved and one super proud coach holding back tears as he commends the lads in the sheds!

Mayfield returned to the top of the ladder after letting Suns borrow it for a couple of weeks. Suns and Dudley were due to play the next day and any result other than a Suns win would see Mayfield remain top of the league with 2 games to go. Suns and Dudley fought out a 1-1 draw, leaving Mayfield sitting pretty at the top of the league.

Unfortunately, Covid at this point would set in and interrupted what was promising to be a great finish to the season with Mayfield playing Dudley (3rd) and Suns (2nd) in the last two league games. With no more games going ahead due to Covid Mayfield were awarded the premiership in 1st grade, the 3rd time in 4 years!!!! Not the way we wanted to win it but the 1st grade lads beat every other 1st grade side during the season so would be a harsh judge to say it wasn't deserved!

An absolutely fantastic season for the ZPL squad, yes not just 1st grade this was a squad effort we had to dig deep this year with injuries and unavailability's.

The 1st grade squad proved many people wrong with their successes! 3 premierships in 4 years or 4 premierships in 6 years is something the entire Mayfield Club should be extremely proud of. The squad has changed over the years but one thing has never changed and that is respect every player has for the Mayfield Jersey once they pull it on.

We may not have got the GF win we were determined to get but there is always 2022 lads, when I have no doubt we will come back even stronger!

Finally, I would like to thank each and every one who pulled on the strip in 1st grade this year you all excelled and always bought into whatever I was selling even when it no doubt sounded crazy! I appreciate all your efforts and you all probably have no idea how much winning at Mayfield means to me, but each and every week you turn up and make sure I go home a happy coach and ensure all the time I spend worrying about football is worth it! From the bottom of my heart thank you and lets kick on into 2022 and finally get the GF monkey off our backs!

Pete Woodford
AKA Pistol, Super Calm and Collected Coach!

A few stats are below

Player	Goals	Yellow	Red	Starts	Sub
Mitchell Metcalfe	0	1	0	14	1
Josh Barden	1	4	0	14	1
Lachlan Hill	0	4	0	14	0
Gavin Hardwick	2	0	0	16	0
Josh Pattinson	0	2	0	6	0
Noah Abell	0	0	0	1	1
Aaron Thompson	6	1	0	14	0
Daniel Harvey	2	0	0	14	0
Scott Gunster	3	3	0	8	0
Harry Taylor	4	0	0	16	0
Lachlan Thomas	1	0	0	12	3
Jack Diebold	8	0	0	15	0
Sam Jenkins	5	1	0	15	0
Daniel Nichols	0	0	0	3	4
Khalid Abdullahi	0	0	0	2	7
Taj Abrahams	0	0	0	0	10
Josh Piotrowski	0	0	0	2	7
Luke Guest	0	0	0	0	5

Rory Smyth	0	0	0	0	1
Ben Robinson	0	0	0	2	10
Eijah Barnes	0	0	0	0	2
David Bruce	0	0	0	1	8
Tim Senkalski	4	0	0	1	5
Jarrold Ross	0	0	0	2	1
Stew Pennington	0	0	0	0	1
Dunnil Yo	1	0	0	1	5