



Junior

Player Development Policy

RUPERTSWOOD FOOTBALL CLUB

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT POLICY

This document consists of the following;-

- Explanation
- Club Code of Conduct
- Player Development Policy

It should be read in conjunction with the Mission, Vision and Values Statement.

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1 Explanation

The Rupertswood Football Club is a proud member of the Salesian Family and accordingly is committed to the physical, social, emotional and spiritual development of its members. Don Bosco, the founder of the Order was a teacher. Through our club we endeavor to teach and support our people not only on the football field, but also in their daily lives. To do this we must be committed to epitomise the types of behaviour and qualities we espouse.

In keeping with the club Mission, Vision and Values Statement, this document expands on the principles and practices we believe are crucial to realising our Vision, embarking on the Mission we have set for ourselves, and implementing our shared Values.

Parents and players are expected to read and be familiar with this policy. We encourage parents of younger players to discuss the policy with their children from their first season.

EQUITY

Underpinning the heart of our club is the equity of opportunity for all players to not only play football, but also actively participate in the game.

We recognise players have different physical, emotional and social development rates and needs and this will be taken in to consideration to benefit both the individual and the team. For example, it is doubtful that a player of smaller physical stature would benefit, or even enjoy playing in a position such as ruck. However the same player can be given opportunity to experience midfield or on-ball play as a rover or in a similar position.

Player equity is structured around age groups, predominantly in the Junior section of the Club, and will be based on the playing rules adopted by the football league in which the Club participates, while still providing a framework for all players to receive equity in playing time and positional experience.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Ongoing development and enhancement of personal confidence and self esteem is a core objective of our club. As such, we recognise players of all ages may, from time to time, have special needs apart from obvious physical needs such as injuries or skill deficiencies.

We recognise that people, particularly coaches and Club officials, may play a very important role in personal development by being a 'significant' adult in a persons life, and provide a framework to assist with special needs when they arise.

GRIEVANCE

Players, parents and coaches are actively encouraged to raise and discuss with each other, any concerns or issues that may arise.

Typically, the coach or team manager will be the first point of contact and every effort should be made to resolve issues or conflict here. However we understand this may not always be possible or appropriate and provide a structure for the escalation of concerns or issues that can not be resolved between the individuals concerned.

On occasion, a grievance may require disciplinary action as a result of conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate or unacceptable both in terms of the Club's Values and within society in general. The policy also provides context to address these types of issues.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Guidelines for the implementation of the policy are provided for the benefit of parents, players and coaches alike. It should be noted that these are guidelines only. The expectation being that coaches are able to exercise discretion in implementation, always ensuring the core principles of equity and development (both personal and playing) are maintained.

2 Club Code of Conduct

2.1 Club Expectation of Coaching Staff

All Coaches are expected to:

- Be familiar with the club's policies and practices as outlined within this manual.
- To implement the policies and practices of the club.
- Adhere to the Coaches Code of Conduct.
- Actively participate in at least two seminars conducted by the AFL/AFCA. Coaches must attend all other club meetings (approx 4) in order to develop the coaches' skills and knowledge.
- Participate in evaluation of their performances.
- Conduct a pre-season player/parent information session incorporating information as required by the club.

2.1.1 Professional Conduct

- Coaches must address players in a controlled and positive manner.
- Coaches must not use offensive language or make cultural, sexist or racist references.
- Coaches are not to involve themselves in negative dialogue with opposition, coaches, officials, players or spectators.
- Coaches and team managers are responsible for the conduct of their officials and players.

Coaches are required to report to the committee, any official, player or spectator who they believe are behaving in a manner which may reflect badly on the Rupertswood Football Club, as soon as possible.

2.1.2 The role of the Coach as a Teacher

- The development of all players' skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- Acknowledgement that all players are unique and have their particular strengths and weaknesses, which need to be addressed.
- Positively support and encourage players for their efforts helping to build self-esteem.

2.2 Officials' Code of Conduct

In addition to football's General Code of Behaviour, you must meet the following requirements in regard to your conduct during any activity held or sanctioned by football, a member association or an affiliated club and in your role as an official appointed by football, a member association or an affiliated club:

1. Place the safety and welfare of the players/participants above all else.
2. Accept responsibility for all actions taken.
3. Be impartial.
4. Avoid any situation which may lead to a conflict of interest.
5. Be courteous, respectful and open to discussion and interaction.
6. Value the individual in sport.

2.3 Parent and Spectators Code of Conduct

Whilst it is sometimes difficult to deal with at the time, Coaches and Team Managers are expected to monitor the behavior of Parents and Spectators. Parents or Spectators breaching the 'Parents and Spectators Code of Conduct' should either be spoken to or informed that their behavior is unacceptable or be reported to the committee. The Parents and Spectators Code of Conduct is as follows:

- Rupertswood Football Club supports and adopts the AFL's Kids First program and Code Of Conduct (see below for details).
- Encourage participation but don't force it. Teach the message that it's not whether you win or lose but how you play the game.
- Encourage an understanding of the rules by showing a genuine interest.
- Never ridicule mistakes or defeats – you will destroy confidence very quickly.
- Remember you are there to support the children's enjoyment before your own.
- Lead by example and respect all players, coaches, umpires and spectator.
- Personally recognize all volunteers who are giving their valuable time.
- Never publicly criticize umpires – raise you concerns calmly in private with the coaches or team manager.
- Lead the way in stamping about all racial, verbal or physical abuse.

2.3.1 AFL Kids First

Excerpt from the AFL web site, www.afl.com.au ;-

Today's parents have an important role in the delivery and support of sporting activities for their own and other children. With it comes a clear responsibility to act in a constructive and encouraging manner at all times.

Barracking and wanting your child to perform well is human nature, but it is critical that this should be done in a responsible manner avoiding the ugly parent syndrome at all times.

The AFL invests over \$23 million annually in strategies that support the participation of 450,000 players throughout Australia. AFL Kids First is a program that has been designed for leagues and associations to guide parents so that both they and their children obtain the maximum benefit and enjoyment from their participation in junior programs and matches.

AFL Kids First includes recommendations for leagues, associations and their clubs to manage situations where parents become over-enthusiastic and risk having a negative impact on their children's activities.

The basic principles of AFL Kids First are to remind parents that:

- Sport for children is a vital part of their growing up.
- Children like to win, but more importantly, they want to have fun.
- Parents need to set the right example at the sports ground, not just at home.
- Parents should be proud of their child's efforts irrespective of the result.
- Sport is important to children's self esteem.

2.3.2 AFL Kids First Code Of Conduct

1. Remember that children play sport for their enjoyment, not yours.
2. Encourage children to participate – do not force participation upon them.
3. Focus on the child's efforts and self esteem rather than whether they win or lose.
4. Encourage children to always participate according to the rules.
5. Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or for the team losing a game.
6. Remember that children learn best by example – applaud the efforts of all players in both teams.
7. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from sporting activities.
8. Show appreciation of volunteer coaches, officials and administrators, without whom your child could not participate.
9. Respect umpires' decisions and teach children to do likewise.
10. Remember that smoking and the consumption of alcohol is unacceptable at junior sport.

For more details on the AFL's Kids First programme, visit the AFL web site on www.afl.com.au.

3 Team Selection

3.1 Player Selection Policy.

The Club will attempt to establish competitive teams in each division in which the club is represented. Based on the number of players each season, each team will have the same number of players or as close to the same number of players as is possible. The Club's aim is to not exceed 24 players per team in each age division, however exceptions may occur some age groups as the Club seeks to balance team numbers with an opportunity for young people to participate in football, and other area's such as sibling's and friendships.

- **Division A:** It is recognised that the RDFL competition is designed so that Division A becomes the strongest division. As such this team will be the selected as the strongest team in the age group, comprised mostly of upper aged players, who are experienced in the age group, however selection will be moderated by the sibling and player friendship principles of the club (discussed below).
- **Division C:** Will be comprised mostly of the youngest players in the age group, who are developing their skills. However selection will be moderated by the sibling and player friendship principles of the Club (discussed below).
- **Division B:** Generally comprised of upper age players who are still developing their skills in the age group or younger aged players not selected for Div A or C, moderated by ability, sibling and player friendship principles of the club (discussed below).

3.2 Team Selection

- The Club will establish a panel to oversee team selection. This panel will be chaired by the coaches coordinator.
- In consultation with coaches the panel will recommend the team selection to the Committee. Consultation with some families may be required in order to make the final recommendations. The Committee will ratify the recommendation.

3.3 Player Movement within Team Structure:

- Once selected, players in the Under 10's, 12's and 14's will remain in that Division for the season, unless there is an obvious anomaly or other extenuating factor. The Club may consider movement of a player during the season if an imbalance in player numbers has occurred between the Divisions.
- Opportunity for movement between the Divisions will be allowed at the under 16 level. Coaches will need to clearly explain the reason for player movement at this level.

3.4 Sibling Principle.

The Club will attempt to accommodate siblings during the selection process. If in the opinion of the Club, two or more children from the same family should play in different divisions, the family will be consulted and the advantages and disadvantages and options discussed. Unless extenuating circumstances exist, the family will be asked to accept the Club's decision, however the Club may revise its decision following these discussions, and will make all reasonable attempts to provide the family with a satisfactory alternative.

3.5 Friendship Principle

In regard to children's sport, it is recognised that children enjoy playing with their friends, however it is the Clubs aim to create an environment where new friendships are formed and where team spirit flourishes. The Club recognises that existing friendships are crucial to some children's confidence and self esteem and may consider friendships as a factor in the selection process.

3.6 Other factors.

- All team selections at the commencement of the year are subject to the final approval of the Committee.
- Parents and players are asked to recognise that selecting up to 13 teams from approximately 300 players is a difficult and time consuming task and whilst personal preferences may be taken into account, they may not always be accommodated.
- Any team changes can only occur with the approval of the coaches coordinator and Committee.

4 Player Development

4.1 Equity of Opportunity

At the very core of our club is the maintenance of equity of opportunity to play football. This has a profound impact on the self-esteem of the player, the development of their skills, fitness and understanding of the game.

The spirit of equity is that all players have the same opportunity to develop and enjoy their football. We acknowledge that as our players move through the age groups the implementation of equity will vary.

We acknowledge that players develop at a different rate across all age groups, and that implementation of a policy that covers all aspects of a players growth and development is difficult. To this end, the following has been developed in accordance with the application of playing rules to the various age groups. Implementation is mandatory for all age groups.

Coaches must keep sufficient records to support the expectations outlined below, and for verification purposes in the event of a grievance. More Detailed information is contained in the Coaches Manual.

4.1.1 Up to and including Under 12's

Every effort will be made to make certain that all players have the opportunity to play as much effective football as possible. To guarantee this occurs, coaches are expected to:

- 1. Ensure every player is effectively involved in the game while on the field.** This is particularly important in one-sided games and may require coaches to move players to different positions to ensure players are given every opportunity to be involved in that game.
- 2. Ensure all players, where possible, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.**
- 3. Select players into the different positions, through out the course of the game.**
- 4. Ensure that all players are on the field by the start of the second quarter time.**
- 5. Ensure all players have a minimum of three quarters of football per game.**

4.1.2 Under 14.

Every effort will be made to make certain that all players have the opportunity to play as much effective football as possible, however more emphasis is placed on development of players abilities in "Areas" of the ground. "Areas" are referred to as Backs, Midfields (including on-ballers), and Forwards. For this to occur, coaches are expected to:

- 1. Ensure all players have a minimum of three quarters of football per game.**
- 2. Ensure every player has the opportunity for effective involvement in the game during the course of the game.** This is particularly important in one-sided games and may require coaches to move players to different positions or Areas to ensure players are given every opportunity to be involved in that game.
- 3. Ensure all players, where possible, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.**
- 4. Select players into different positions within a playing Area. Players can not play in the same Area for more than 2 consecutive weeks. Where a player is selected into the same Area for a 2nd week, the player must be selected into a different position in that playing Area.** We recognise that increased playing time in each Area provides better opportunity for players to develop the skills required for that Area, however all players must have the opportunity to experience effective participation in each Area.
- 5. Ensure players average similar time in each Area over the season.**
- 6. Ensure that all players are on the field by quarter time.**

4.1.3 Under 16.

1. **Ensure all players average at least three quarters of football per game over the course of the home and away season, and that players have a minimum of the equivalent of two quarters of football in any one match.** (Average 42 quarters per home and away season, for a 14 week season.) This may result in players having less game time during one match and more game time in another match to achieve the $\frac{3}{4}$ average for the season. Coaches may adjust playing time to compensate for injury or illness during the season, to achieve equity in total playing time for as many players as possible.
2. **Ensure every player has the opportunity for effective involvement in the game during the course of the game.** This is particularly important in one-sided games and may require coaches to move players to different positions or Areas to ensure players are given every opportunity to be involved in that game.
3. **Ensure all players, where possible, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.**
4. **Select players into the different playing Areas at least twice during the season.** We recognise that increased playing time in each Area provides better opportunity for players to develop the skills required for that Area. We also recognise that players in this age group will be developing specific positional strengths and therefore coaches will have the flexibility to allow players extended time in specific positions.

4.2 **Equity, Availability, and Total Playing Time**

Total Playing time is the total number of quarters a player participates in for the duration of the Home and Away season. A player who starts a quarter on the ground and subsequently leaves the ground due to injury, is deemed to have played that quarter. Similarly, time on the ground substituting for an injured player does not count towards the substituting players total playing time.

Occasionally, players will be unavailable for a game either due to illness, injury, or family commitments (holidays, family events, etc).

Where a side has sufficient numbers to require one or more players to be rostered off each week, the Coach must make reasonable effort to ensure a players rostered off game coincides with planned absences wherever possible. Parents are required to give a team official (coaching staff or Team Manager) as much advanced notice as possible of planned absences.

Games missed due to illness, injury or planned absence will count towards the game(s) that a player would have been rostered off for in teams where player numbers exceed 24.

Where a player misses more than their share of game time due to injury, illness or planned absence, the coach may adjust other players total playing time for the season, at their discretion, in order to achieve a degree of equity in total playing time for **all** players.

We recognise that this can be difficult to achieve, and no player should be disadvantaged in an attempt to achieve equity in total playing time. Coaches have a duty of care to players returning from injury or illness, and must ensure all returning players are fit to play prior to considering total playing time equity.

While every reasonable effort will be made to ensure total playing time equity for all players, generally a player who misses game time or matches due to injury, illness or personal absence, in excess of any game(s) the player may have been rostered off for, will have a reduced total playing time for the season compared to players who have only missed their rostered games.

Coaches must maintain sufficient records to support total playing time equity as discussed above.

4.3 Player Rostering Policy

24 players are able to play each week. Where team lists exceed 24 players, some players will be required to be rostered off each week during the season. If possible, Coaches and Team Managers should give parents and players the opportunity to advise in advance, any times of unavailability to ensure these games missed are counted as games rostered off. It is expected that all players will be rotated equitably. Sufficient records must be maintained..

A player who is injured and leaves the ground during a game, and is unable to return to the ground for the remainder of the game, is deemed to have played that game, and the loss of game time will **not** be counted as a bye (rostered off game) for that player.

4.4 Finals Selection

It is generally recognised that finals football is different from the home and away games. The policy will be based on the following principles.

- An opportunity for as many players as is possible to experience finals football.
- An understanding that player selection and playing time for individual players gives the team the best possible opportunity to win.
- An understanding that the policy will provide coaches in the under 16's a greater scope for varying playing time for individual players than the other age groups. (Note that Under 9's and Under 10's do not compete in the finals.)
- Attitude, attendance, behaviour and adherence to the Players Code of Conduct, at training sessions and games during the season may impact finals selection or playing time.

The main points of the policy, subject to injury or illness are:

1. In the event of the team playing in one final, a maximum of 24 players will be selected.
2. In the event of playing 2 finals, all players will play at least one final.
3. In the event of playing 3 finals, all players will play at least 2 finals.
4. Up to and including Under 14's, a game will be considered to be at least 2 quarters of football, with all players being on the field **prior to** half time. This is mandatory.
5. All other point outlined above under Equity Of Opportunity continue to apply.

4.5 Voting Procedure

Calculation of Best & Fairest Awards To be completed by team mangers and handed to Club Secretary as required at the end of the season. This will be determined based upon season end & fall in line with date of Presentation Night.

Confidentiality in regards to the voting must be guaranteed throughout the season.

If a player is suspended by the Club or the League during the course of the season, that player will not be eligible for Best & Fairest Awards, and the award will be given to the player with the next highest count of Best & Fairest votes.

5 Training Policy

Training is an important aspect of a player's physical, social and game playing skills development. As such, the Club expects all registered players to attend organised training sessions.

If a player is unable to attend training it is the responsibility of the player, parent or legal guardian to advise a member of their team's coaching panel of the player's non attendance prior to training commencing, or as soon as practical after training has finished.

We recognise that exceptional circumstances may arise from time to time which make it difficult for a player to attend training, arrive at the specified times and / or on certain days. In these instances, players, parents, or guardians are expected to discuss their individual situation with team officials (coaches, team manager) making alternate arrangements where possible.

A player's attitude at training is equally important, not only for that player's personal development, but also that of their team mates. All players are expected to respect their fellow team mates desire to learn and participate at training, and conduct themselves accordingly.

Repeated failure to attend organised training sessions without prior knowledge or arrangement with coaching staff, or repeated inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour at training may result in a reduction or loss of playing time for that player.

6 Dealing with 'Special Needs' of Players

From time to time, we may become aware that one or more of our players have special needs, apart from obvious physical needs such as injuries and skill deficiencies. The other needs may fall into three other categories being Educational, Emotional and Social;-

- a. Educational Needs. Not all students within a classroom learn the same way or learn at the same rate. Some students have 'Specific Learning Problems' that make it very difficult to learn using traditional teaching and coaching methods. It is important to be aware of any Learning difficulties that a player in your team may have. Modify your presentation of information in an attempt to accommodate these players Learning Needs.
- b. Emotional and Social. From time to time players may exhibit uncooperative behavior that negatively affects training and coaching. Often this can be put down to adolescent behavior and nothing more needs to be done, however such behavior could be indicative of more serious emotional or social problems that the player may be experiencing. It is in the best interest of the coach to spend time communicating with the player in an environment free from tension to ascertain if there are social or emotional issues that affecting the child's behavior. As coaches it is not our role to solve such issues but we play a very important role by being a 'significant' adult in this person life, prepared to talk and communicate with the child, in a supportive environment where a common interests exists, that being football. The club has access to a large support network for young people who are experiencing Emotional and Social difficulties within their lives. Professional advice for our coaches is available in dealing with such situations and many professional services are available through this network for the player.

6.1 Discipline

It is expected that players at all times, conduct themselves in a manner that is in keeping with the Club principles and ethos when involved in a club sanctioned event. Club sanctioned events are;-

- any match on game day,
- training, and
- any Club sanctioned social event.

In the event of a player behaving in an inappropriate or unacceptable manner at any of the above, the matter may be referred to the Mediation Panel for review.

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour is any behaviour or action that is illegal, immoral, conflicts with this or any other policy the Club may implement, or behaviour that a reasonable person would generally considered inappropriate or unacceptable within the community or society at large.

Any serious breach of this policy will be referred to the Mediation Panel for review, and may result in loss of game time together with any additional measures the Mediation Panel, Club or League may require to be undertaken.

7 Grievances

The Rules Of Association of the Club contain guidelines for the handling of general grievances and disputes.

In the event of a grievance between;-

- A player and team officials (Coaches, Team Manager, etc)
- A parent and team officials (Coaches, Team Manager, etc)

It is expected that all issues will firstly be discussed between the parties with a genuine effort made to gain a satisfactory outcome for all parties. In the event of a breakdown in solving the dispute the matter may be referred to the Mediation Panel for adjudication.

8 Mediation Panel

It is the role of the Mediation Panel to provide independent mediation in the event of disputes, disciplinary actions, or events of inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour, in accordance with this policy, that are unable to be resolved between the persons involved.

The Mediation Panel is endorsed by the Rupertswood Football Club Committee and its members have been appointed by the Committee from within members of the Club.

At all times, the Mediation Panel will adjudicate in an independent manner and in the event of a Panel member having a conflict of interest they will abstain from adjudicating in that particular case.

The number of people that will sit on this Panel will be a maximum of three at any one time, and any decision by the Panel must be by a majority.

All matters referred to the Mediation Panel will be documented.

If a person or persons involved in any matter brought before the Panel disputes the decision of the Mediation Panel, that person or persons have the right to appeal the decision to the Rupertswood Football Club Committee, in accordance with the Grievance section of the Rules Of Association of the Club.