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Rupertswood
Football & Netball Club

**Junior
Player Development Policy
2022**

(Updated September 2021)

RUPERTSWOOD FOOTBALL & NETBALL CLUB INC 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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1.0 Explanation.

The Rupertswood Football & Netball Club is committed to the physical, social and emotional development of its members.

Through our club we endeavour 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 in OPPORTUNITY FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Guidelines for the implementation of the policy are provided for the benefit of parents, players and coaches alike. 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 player development policy 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 Netball 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 confidence and self-esteem.

2.2 Officials' Code of Conduct.

In addition to football's General Code of Behaviour, the coach and officials of Rupertswood Netball Club must meet the following requirements in regard to conduct during any game or activity held or sanctioned by the club. These requirements are:

- Placing the safety and welfare of the players/participants above all else.
- Accepting responsibility for all actions taken.
- Being impartial.
- Avoiding any situation which may lead to a conflict of interest.
- Being courteous, respectful and open to discussion and interaction.
- Valuing 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 behaviour of Parents and Spectators. Parents or Spectators breaching the 'Parents and Spectators Code of Conduct' should either be spoken to or informed that their behaviour is unacceptable or be reported to the committee. The Parents and Spectators Code of Conduct is as follows:

- Rupertswood Football & Netball 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.
- 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 your 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, [AFL Kids First](#)

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.

- Remember that children play sport for their enjoyment, not yours.
- Encourage children to participate – do not force participation upon them.
- Focus on the child's efforts and self-esteem rather than whether they win or lose.
- Encourage children to always participate according to the rules.
- Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or for the team losing a game.
- Remember that children learn best by example – applaud the efforts of all players in both teams.
- Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from sporting activities.
- Show appreciation of volunteer coaches, officials and administrators, without whom your child could not participate.
- Respect umpires' decisions and teach children to do likewise.
- 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 [AFL kids first](#)

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 areas such as sibling's and friendships.

- **Team A:** It is recognised that the EDFL 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).
- **Team 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).
- **Team 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).

3.2 Team Selection.

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

3.3 Player Movement within Team Structure.

- Once selected, players in the Under 8's, 10's, 12's, 14's and 16'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 14's and 16's level. Coaches will need to clearly explain the reason for player movement at this level.

3.4 Sibling Principle.

If more than one child from the same family plays in the same age group the club will attempt to keep the players together in the that team.

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 Junior Sub-Committee.
- Parents and players are asked to recognise that selecting multiple teams from approximately 200 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 age group coordinator and the Junior Sub-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 fair opportunity to develop and enjoy their football and develop the skills in all positions on the field. This development is highly valued at all levels in our modern game.

The policy acknowledges that players develop at different rates across all age groups, and that as our players move through the age groups the implementation of equity will be adjusted to reflect player growth and development.

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 coaches at all age groups.

Coaches must keep sufficient records to support the expectations outlined below and for verification purposes in the event of a grievance.

4.1.1 Under 8 and under 10's

The coach needs to ensure every player is effectively involved in the game while on the field. This is particularly important in one-sided games and will require the coaches to rotate players to the different positions throughout the course of the game to ensure players are given every opportunity to be involved in that game. Therefore the coach needs to ensure that:

- all players have a minimum of three quarters of football per game. If a player is injured during the course of a game where that player is ruled ineligible to return to the field it will be counted as if that player has played their three quarters for the game.
- all players, where possible, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.
- **Players must play in the different areas on the field within a game to maximise their development. "Areas" are referred to as Backs, Midfields (including on-ballers), and Forwards. For this to occur, coaches are expected to select players into different playing areas each quarter.**

4.1.2 Under 12.

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 ensure that:

- all players are on the field by the start of the second quarter,
- all players have a minimum of three quarters of football per game (unless injured).
- all players, where possible, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.
- **players are selected into at least two playing areas each game and in all playing areas over the course of two weeks: i.e. backs, mids, or forwards and ensure players average similar time in each Area over the season.**

4.1.3 Under 14.

Every effort will be made to make certain that all players have the opportunity to play as much effective football as possible over the course of the season, however more emphasis is placed on development of players relative to their ability to play particular positions and roles. For this to occur, coaches are expected to ensure that:

- all players are on the field by the start of the second quarter,
- all players have a minimum of three quarters of football per game (unless injured).
- all players, where possible, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.
- **All players are selected into all three playing areas over the course of two consecutive weeks: i.e. backs, mids, or forwards and ensure players average similar time in each Area’s over the season.**

4.1.4 Under 16.

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 ability to play particular positions and roles. For this to occur, coaches must ensure that:

- all players are on the field by the start of the second quarter.
- all players average at least three quarters of football per game over the course of the home and away season,
- players have a minimum or 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.

- If a player is injured during the course of a game where that player is ruled ineligible to return to the field it will be counted as if that player has played their three quarters for the game.
- all players, have the same number of byes per season, if team numbers exceed 24 players.

Players must have the opportunity to continue developing their skills within the different playing areas on the ground.

Therefore, players must be selected for at least two quarters over 3 weeks in each of the three different playing areas.

This recognises that:

- consecutive playing time in each Area provides an opportunity for players to develop the skills required for that Area.
- The importance of players developing the skills and knowledge of all areas on the ground, further skilling each player with the versatility that is required in our modern game

4.2 Player Rostering Policy. 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.

24 players are able to play each week. Where team lists exceed 24 players, and one or more players needs 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 due to family commitments (holidays, family events, etc).

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

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.

4.3 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.
- 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:

- In the event of the team playing in one final, a maximum of 24 players will be selected.
- In the event of playing 2 finals, all players will play at least one final.
- In the event of playing 3 finals, all players will play at least 2 finals.
- 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.
- All other points outlined above under Equity of Opportunity continue to apply.

4.4 Voting Procedure.

Calculation of Best & Fairest Awards To be completed by team managers 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 nonattendance **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 Working 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 team learn the same way or learn at the same rate. Some students have 'Specific Learning Difficulties' that make it very problematic 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 behaviour that negatively affects training and coaching. Often this can be put down to adolescent behaviour and nothing more needs to be done, however such behaviour 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 are affecting the child's behaviour.

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.

7 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.

8 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)
- Between players (including bullying concerns)

Players, parents and coaches are actively encouraged to raise and discuss 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.

This may not always be possible or appropriate and the concerns or issues cannot be resolved between the individuals concerned. In the event of a breakdown in solving the dispute, the matter may be referred to the Mediation Panel for adjudication.

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.

9 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 & Netball 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 & Netball Club Committee, in accordance with the Grievance section of the Rules of Association of the Club.