

Football Operations Guidelines and Team Selection

Introduction

This document outlines the team selection policy guidelines at Edithvale Aspendale Junior Football Club (EAJFC), this will form the framework for team selection at club level. This document will be used as a guideline to deliver a consistent approach to team selection across all age groups and divisions and align with AFL South East by-laws.

The main premise that kids play sports is for fun and enjoyment, every piece of research suggests children play sports because it brings them enjoyment. This must remain the number one consideration when selecting teams.

EAJFC places a high emphasis on player participation, player development and most importantly player enjoyment from under 8's through to under 18's.

- Development of football skills and helping players achieve their potential and individual goals is important.
- Winning should never take precedence over player participation and fun. We run Junior Development programs to further develop our players, but the number one goal of our club is to give our kids the most enjoyment from playing football and keeping them involved in organised sports.

This policy has been developed using AFL Victoria Team Selection Policy Guidelines. The document provides the framework that will guide coaches, players, parents and the committee in ensuring the objectives are met and that each player is given the appropriate opportunity to actively participate and enjoy their participation in Australian Rules football at EAJFC.

The EAJFC Football Operations Committee will refer to this policy when forming teams each season. The policy is a guideline to team selection and individual circumstances will be taken into consideration. The policy will be reviewed annually or as new circumstances arise. They are secondary to any league regulation and will follow league regulations should a policy clash occur.

Team Selection Objectives

EAJFC aims to provide an opportunity for members of our local area to participate in Australian Rules Football and enhance their health and wellbeing through organised sport. The Club, will always, endeavour to provide for the health, welfare and wellbeing of its members.

The objectives of the team selection process are:

- To provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all players
- To give all players the opportunity to develop and grow
- To provide players every possible opportunity to reach their maximum potential.
- To ensure that the selection policy applies equally to all players.
- To aim for continuous improvement of all players and teams.
- To maintain open lines of communication and cooperation between coaches, players, parents and committee.
- To meet the objectives of the FDJFL, AFL SE and AFL Junior Match Policy
- To provide an environment that instills pride in our club and demonstrates respect of our opponents and the community in general.

Team Selection Guidelines

The Club's Team Formation Policy is bound by the rules of FDJFL and AFLSE. It should be noted that the FDJFL does NOT operate or authorise a player/team grading system for under 8's to under 14 age groups.

Team formation applies to all teams in all years, not only at Under 8 and 9 level. There are no guarantees of a player to be in a certain team, or to always remain in a certain team.

There are often many factors involved in team formation, and while best endeavours are made to accommodate requests, this will only be achieved if other criteria are met.

Where multiple sides are formed in a particular age division, the Football Operations Committee or its nominee will make team allocation decisions. Team allocation will consider factors such as team played in previous years, school attended, team numbers, and where considered appropriate, player skill and abilities to aid team competitiveness for their respective playing division.

AFLSE & FDJFL by-laws state that ***"In the age groups from under 8 – under 12 once a team is formed players will remain in that team from season to season unless a request is made to change teams for reasons such as player welfare and wellbeing."*** EAJFC must apply to the League to move a player from one team to another where the following exists;

- Players are not returning to the team and therefore team numbers are low
- Special family circumstances
- Player welfare

During pre-season, all teams within an age group are required to train together as one group until teams have been formalised.

In under 13 to under 18 age groups where multiple teams are formed, AFLSE and FDJFL by-laws state ***“To ensure that the League can offer competitive competitions clubs are able to move players from one team to another without restriction to ensure that players are allocated to a team that best suits their skills and ability.”***

Before moving any players or submitting any applications, EAJFC will engage the player and the parents in the decision-making process.

Participation, development and enjoyment are at the forefront of our team selection policy and player movement.

Under 8 & 9 Mixed/ Under 10 Girls

In these age groups the emphasis is placed on participation in the game and providing a structured environment for players to continue to develop their fundamental football skills

The initial formation of Under 8 teams is made considering the following criteria (not necessarily in the order listed):

- Age and year level of the player
- At junior level community sports team formation is based on allowing children to foster varied relationships and friendships.
- Overall team balance and balance of team numbers
- Continued development of each player, no matter their ability
- Consideration of player size, strengths and skills so that a reasonable balance can be achieved in the individual team selection and positioning

Teams will not be formed predominantly from a single school where such options exist, nor to single-mindedly strive for on-field success at the expense of overall player participation, enjoyment and development.

In the case of multiple teams within the same age group in the one year, EAJFC will endeavour to field competitive, balanced teams. The Club does not believe in putting all the players regarded as “good” in one team, with the remainder of players making up the other team. Rather, we will do our best to fairly allocate the players to create evenly skilled and balanced competitive teams.

The final makeup of multiple teams will be guided by the football operations committee, along with the coaches.

Under 10 Mixed/Under 12 Girls

Once a team is formed in under 8’s players will remain in that team from season to season unless a request is made to change teams for reasons such as player welfare and wellbeing or EAJFC need to move players for team numbers to be balanced.

Existing players progressing from the younger age group will be split evenly between the teams formed by the football operations committee.

Both new and existing players will be allocated to teams based on a similar criteria as in the Under 8 & 9 Mixed/ Under 10 Girls mentioned above-

- Consideration of existing team formation
- Mixture of skill in the respective positions required in the teams
- Overall team balance and balance of team numbers. If numbers suggest that a new team is to be formed, it will be formed following registration cut off.
- Continued development of each player, no matter their ability
- Consideration of player size, strengths, weaknesses and skills so that a reasonable balance can be achieved in the individual team selection and positioning

All new players will be allocated to teams until the team reaches the average number of the other team.

Under 11 & 12s

By the under 11 and 12's the Committee is conscious that relationships and team dynamics are starting to shape so there will not be team changes unless there is a discrepancy in team numbers or a request is made for reasons such as player welfare and wellbeing.

New players to the club will be allocated as per the stated player allocation guidelines (see above). In all cases the team with the overall better player talent and capacity will play in the higher division.

The Under 11 and 12 competitions will see teams move from playing modified Junior Match Policy rules into full AFL rules for mixed teams and expanded rules for under 12 Girls. The club will communicate to parents and players the division in which their team has been placed by the league.

Where multiple teams are formed in this age division and there is an early indication that one team will have difficulty fielding a team due to player numbers, the Committee has the option of moving appropriate players, subject to FDJFL prior approval.

EAJFC will attempt to have minimal player numbers in each team so each player will get maximum game time and opportunity to develop on the ground.

EAJFC CANNOT move players between teams without written approval from AFLSE, players from previous years will remain in the same team unless a request is made to change teams for reasons such as player welfare and wellbeing or EAJFC need to move players for team playing numbers to be balanced.

AFLSE & FDJFL by-laws state that "In the age groups from under 8 – under 12 once a team is formed players will remain in that team from season to season unless a request is made to change teams for reasons such as player welfare and wellbeing." EAJFC must apply to the League to move a player from one team to another where the following exists;

- Players are not returning to the team and therefore team numbers are low
- Special family circumstances
- Player welfare

When team numbers become unbalanced we may require some players to move from team to team. This will be based on the following scenarios

- All teams have less than the required of players to field a full team
- One or more team/s has less than the required number of players to field a full team and the other team/s has more than the required number of players to field a team
- All teams have enough or more than the required number to field a team but one team has more than 4 additional players

Coaches and parents will be involved in the process and movement of any players between teams.

Team Selection for under 13 - under 18

EAJFC aspires to provide players the opportunity to play in the division that is best suited to each individual and give those players who wish to play at the highest level within the league the opportunity to do so.

Research reveals that players in these age groups still want enjoyment and development out of their sport, winning is still not a high priority for them, remaining playing organised sport is. To ensure that the AFLSE and FDJFL can offer competitive competitions in these age groups, clubs are able to move players from one team to another without restriction to ensure that players are allocated to a team that best suits their skills and ability.

In these age groups it is important that players learn how to train and consolidate the basic skills with the introduction of advanced technical and tactical skills including decision-making in games and training. Whilst it is important for players to be given the opportunity to develop their skills, it is also important for players to gain a level of competency in different positions on the field as they progress through the junior pathway.

During pre-season, all teams within an age group are required to train together as one group until teams have been formalised.

Multiple teams in the same age group

Where multiple sides are formed in the same age group and in different Divisions, the Football Operations Committee, the Coaching Coordinator and independent selectors in consultation with the Coaches are empowered to select teams based on the following;

- perception of the player's abilities based on the Division the team is playing in
- potential of the player
- physical development
- player's attitude
- player's commitment
- player's adherence to relative Codes of Conduct
- player's adherence to team rules
- player's attendance at training
- equal numbers across teams
- and the need for team balance

EAJFC will engage the players and parents in the decision-making process.

Team Selection period

For those age groups where there are multiple teams, EAJFC can move players from one team to another without restriction to ensure that players are allocated to a team that best suits their skills and ability. EAJFC will undertake a selection period during February and March. It will be the requirement of all players wishing to be selected in a team to attend this selection period. During this period the Football Operations Committee, the Coaching Coordinator and independent selectors will assess players based on the following criteria :-

Football craft and ability: Kicking, Decision Making, clean hands, ball winning ability, knowledge, reading the play, clearance work,

Physical: Speed, Endurance, Power, body development, agility, athletic capability

Character & Competitiveness: attitude, passion, attendance, commitment, development, focus, attentiveness, competitiveness, body language, effort, leadership

Players will be able to nominate whether they wish to play in the higher division or not. As part of the selection period the club will conduct try-outs and practice matches in which the initial squads will be developed, based on the selection criteria listed above. The Football Operations Committee, the Coaching Coordinator and independent selectors will select the sides.

The coaching staff from both teams will work collaboratively during this process to ensure that each player is able to participate to their full potential.

To assist in maintaining the above guidelines, both Coaches, the Football Operations Committee and the Coaching Coordinator need to assess and continually review each player's stage of physical development, level of skill and understanding of the game.

- During the season the Football Operations Committee, the Coaching Coordinator and the junior development officer will continually review the competitiveness of both teams, and the individual performances of players. Each player's development should be continually monitored.
- It is a priority that Coaches DO NOT develop two separate teams within an age group.

The u17/18 year can be regarded as a transition into senior football and therefore the playing standard generally becomes higher, which may require a higher player commitment. A transition program is developed in conjunction with the EAFC.

Team selection when reducing teams in an age group (4 to 3 / 3 to 2)

Depending on team numbers from year to year EAJFC may have to reduce the number of teams it fields in a particular age group. For example, if EAJFC fielded 3 teams in under 11 and did not have

sufficient numbers for 3 teams the following year in under 12's there would be a requirement to field 2 teams.

In the above scenario where multiple teams will remain in the age groups under 8 to under 14, EAJFC will endeavour to field competitive, balanced teams. The Club does not believe in putting all the players regarded as "good" in one team, with the remainder of players making up the other team. Rather, we will do our best to fairly allocate the players to create evenly skilled and balanced competitive teams. In this situation parents and players will be consulted on the process before any team formation takes place.

When the above scenario is required the team with the lowest team numbers will be dissolved and players moved to other teams within that age group.

Players from within that team will be placed in a team based on:-

- Physical development
- Overall team balance and balance of team numbers.
- Continued development of each player
- Best and fairest voting
- Coaches input

To ensure we endeavour to field competitive balanced teams best and fairest voting will be considered and the top 10 players in the best and fairest from the previous season divided evenly between the remaining teams.

New players joining the club (all age groups)

If a new player joins the club or transfers in from another club, they will be bound by the same team selection policy as outlined for their age group. They will be allocated to a team based on team balance and the competition that best suited to their ability and development.

Team numbers for all age groups

Junior Match Policy teams (Under 8 – Under 10)

Team	Players on field	Max players on team sheet (AFLSE)	EAJFC Max team numbers (where possible)
Under 8	12	16	15
Under 9	15	20	18
Under 10	15	20	18
Under 10 Girls	12	16	15

Competitive Age groups

Team	Players on field	Max players on timesheet (AFLSE)	EAJFC Max team numbers (where possible)
Under 11 to 17	18	26	24

Under 12-under 18 Girls	16	26	24
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Playing time and rotations

1. All players are expected to get fair game time every week and play $\frac{3}{4}$ of the game where practicable, including finals. This is achievable with the maximum team numbers outlined above.
2. Top up players should not be given game time ahead of any player of the regular team, unless required through injury, send off or other circumstance. Similar to a medical sub
3. During the course of the home and away season each player is to be rotated through positions so that they can gain experience and learn how to play each position (i.e. Forwards, Backs, & Midfield).
4. Assistant Coaches should monitor the player rotations and are encouraged to complete a rotation spreadsheet or tracker.
5. If a player has any concern about playing time or rotations, speak to your coach or team manager. If playing time and rotations are an ongoing concern contact the Football Operations committee.

Players playing up an Age level

EAJFC will allow players to support another team in a different age group where a team needs that support. Club principles of participation first must be upheld.

The intent of the rule is to ensure that those players who are nominated in one team at the start of the season can maximise playing time irrespective of whether its finals or during the season. Playing up is only permitted to help teams with low numbers in a specific week/ game. Players cannot 'belong' to two teams. They must nominate one team at the start of the year and then adhere to the rules if playing up/ down.

1. FDJFL regulations must be complied with for a player to be eligible to play up.
2. A player is considered to be a *Top-up player* if the team is not his/her *regular team*.
3. A *regular team* is defined as the team the player was nominated for and listed with at the season commencement.
4. A coach of a team that has 18 or less players on match day must, on each occasion, seek permission from the lower age group Coach and gain approval from the Football Operations Committee for a *Top-up player*. Players and parents may not be approached directly.
5. Where a player from a lower age group tops up in a higher age group the lower age group player should NOT start the game in place of a player of the higher age group.

6. Top up players should not be given game time ahead of any player of the regular team, unless required through injury, send off or other circumstance.
7. Consideration should be given to the “top up players welfare” as to his ability to play in that age group and commitments that player has full field on that day.
8. All top up players must be approved by both coaches and the Football Operations team before they will be permitted to play.
9. Top up players should be taken from the age group immediately preceding, all avenues must be exhausted from this age group before gaining top up players from other age groups.
10. No player will be permitted to top up if they are 2 years outside their age group
11. If the team has 18 or more players, the *Top up players* must start the game on the bench and not be interchanged unless other players in their *regular team needs to come off the field*.

These rules apply to regular season and to finals (where qualified)

Finals Policy

In the case where no more than 24 players have been used during the home and away season, the club does not differentiate team selection policy from home and away season to finals participation.

In the case where a team has more than 24 players available for Finals, the coach must ensure that all available players receive at least one (1) half game time.

The team selection policy adopted throughout the season sets an expectation for both participants and parents and will not be altered during finals.

Special Needs

The Club appreciates that there may be extenuating circumstances where a player(s) may wish to be in a particular side. Such requests must be made through a written application to the Football Operations Committee, the application will be assessed and voted upon by the Football Operations committee.

League approval is required for any previously registered player requesting to change teams, and medical or player safety reasons may be included in that consideration.

Registration Priority Policy

We have established the below policy to give a priority sequence for existing and new-to-club players applying to register. Registrations open in November and players and officials will be able to register online through the club website (www.eajfc.com.au).

For u8's, usually the last chance to play at this level is in Grade 2, hence we offer this chance first to these new players. Similarly, Grade 1 kids will have another opportunity in the next year to play at u8 level and can continue to enjoy our excellent Auskick centre.

The registration priority sequence is:

1. Existing u8-u18 players are guaranteed re-registration, if they do so before the cut-off date*.
2. Under 8 applicants will have the opportunity to request up to 2 friends and/or a coach.
3. Other Age Groups – teams will be formed not exceeding maximum team numbers, if possible EAJFC will attempt to create teams with smaller numbers to ensure each player gets maximum game time.
4. Teams will be formed once the registration cut-off date has passed, those who are not registered by this date will not be guaranteed a place in a team.

The registration process is an application to register only. Completion of the registration document does not guarantee registration. Registrations must be accepted by the EAJFC committee and it will do this according to registration policies, which includes this document.

Following our first registration day, usually in early February, we will commence finalising teams and after our second registration day registrations will close and teams will be formed. If a player hasn't registered by this time they may miss out on being selected in a team.

Payment of Registration Fees

NO PAY NO PLAY POLICY

Whilst every reasonable effort will be made to communicate the need to pay any outstanding fees, the Club will enforce its policy to suspend players from participating in games and training sessions if fees have not been paid on time. Unless alternative arrangements have been made with the Registrar, the player in question will not be permitted to participate in the first game of the season.

Refunds of Registration Fees

Players may withdraw from a team up to and including Round 3 and obtain a full refund of their Registration Fee less insurance, affiliation and club administrative fees. After Round 3, the Registration Fee is non-refundable.

Registrations after Commencement of Season

No additional junior registrations will be accepted without the express agreement of any affected Coach after the commencement of the playing season. In all circumstances, the club abides by the League policy that does not allow registrations beyond a certain number per team, unless there are extenuating circumstances. These circumstances generally apply to under 15 – 17 age groups where the Club may be registering only one team in a particular age division and this can enable kids to continue playing sport.

Coaches and Team Managers Responsibilities for Team Selection

Coaches are appointed club officials and must act in the best interests of the club, not only one team. Team Managers are also expected to uphold this directive. They must:

1. Contribute to Team Formation processes and in doing so, maintain a whole-of-club perspective, just as you would coach that the team is bigger than an individual.
2. Must not promise a new or an existing eligible (new) player from any age group a position in any team.
3. League rules prohibit recruitment of players from other clubs. Any 'new' player must not train until written approval from the previous club is received by the club Registrar or Secretary, or other FDJFL rules that may apply.
4. Coaches are also not to encourage, entice or otherwise attract players from other clubs, or other teams within the club to their team. League sanctions against the coach's accreditation status may also apply.
5. When there is a reasonable indication that team structure may change, e.g. reduction in number of teams in an age group, due to a change in player numbers or any other reason, Coaches are strongly advised to not make any promises that could build expectations that such a change will not occur.
6. Under 12 – Under 17 teams are to begin pre-season training together as an age-based squad until team formation for an age group is complete.

St Kilda Next Generation and Interleague Selection

The St Kilda Football Club and FDJFL work together to deliver South Hub Next Generation Academy (NGA) which includes the FDJFL interleague programs.

The NGA Program is run for the following age groups: -

Boys (U13)
Boys (U14)
Boys (U15)
Girls (U15)

St Kilda NGA talent identification staff monitor games across all age groups from under 12 to under 15 and compile a talent identification list of players they have identified to be part of the Next Generation program. To assist the St Kilda Football Club and FDJFL at an under 12 boys and under 15 girls level, EAJFC will work with coaches to provide intelligence on the players who have been identified and those the club would be keen to see within the program.

As a way of background, the key identifiers are players who display some of the following attributes:

- **Football:** Kicking, Decision Making, clean hands, ball winning ability
- **Physical:** Speed, Endurance, Power, scope for future body development

- **Character & Competitiveness:** Players who display a strong personal brand on and off the field, are team players and have a strong passion to improve themselves.

The selection process is to ensure AFLSE and FDJFL capture all talent in the region and to ensure there is a cross section of the competition included. St Kilda Football Club and FDJFL Talent ID staff monitor players throughout each season for U12 to U15 age groups, players selection is based on their observations, talent search and come & try days.

AFL talent potential can be broad and subjective. In addition to the above academy principles, to assist in identifying the appropriate players the below nomination criteria is used:

Player Nomination Criteria:
1. Players who have displayed high talent potential in the following areas: fundamental skill level, strong game sense, athletic, new to the game, from a different sport, a tall player with scope for future development or a mixture of the above.
2. Players who may have been injured/away throughout the previous season or have come from a different region but have proven their ability in previous seasons.
3. Players who have successfully displayed consistent football performance by finishing top 3 in the club B&F in the previous season.
4. Players who are from Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander and/or multicultural backgrounds who display potential talent.

Please note:

- Players who were within the previous year's St Kilda NGA will automatically be invited to the following years programs
- Any eligible players exited from the squads will be invited to the Come & Try days.
- Identifying players from the club is NOT an automatic inclusion to the Academy/Interleague program.
- Player intelligence will be cross checked with St Kilda Football Club and FDJFL's current talent identification list, as there are limited spots available.
- A player who is identified by the club, but not invited into the Academy will automatically be added to the 'Watch List' for the upcoming season where NGA talent identification staff will monitor their progress throughout the year.
- Players may be invited into the program any time by St Kilda Football Club and FDJFL Talent ID staff.