



NORTHCOTE JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

Building strong community spirit through a positive football experience.

Player Placement Policy

NJFC Purpose

The Northcote Junior Football Club exists to:

- Encourage children to participate, improve their football and social skills while creating and building lasting friendships;
- Create an environment where all children are equal and provided with the opportunity to achieve their potential;
- Promote the NJFC core values of Respect (fairness, tolerance & discipline), Participation (individual, family, community), Team (cooperation, inclusion, enjoyment) and Growth (opportunity and improvement);
- Promote Australian Rules Football consistent with the guidance provided by the Australian Football League and the Northern Football League, and;
- Add value to community in which it operates.

Background

During the 2017 season, as a result of feedback and recommendations received post this season's application, the committee identified a need for changes to be made to the policy. Amendments and additions have been made to provide better clarity and understanding for application in 2018 going forward.

Rationale

To ensure that all players, parents and officials of NJFC are provided with a clear and consistent set of guidelines with regards to the placement of players in teams with an understanding of NJFC's commitment to allow all players, regardless of ability, the opportunity to have equal opportunity to play junior football in line with NJFC's stated purpose.

The NFL Rules state that in junior age groups the emphasis is placed on participation and enjoyment. Additional goals are the acquisition of football skills and the nurturing of physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Aims

To maximise participation of all players and increase player retention rates through:

- Ensuring all players in each age group have equal opportunity to participate in games throughout the season.

- Ensuring all players feel a valued and required member of the team.
- Enabling players through enjoyment of their football, to gain greater confidence year to year.
- Acknowledging the varying needs of players as they progress through the age groups as per the below criteria.

Guidelines for U9-12's & U10 & 12 Girls

Main Focus U9-10's & 10 Girls: Participation, Fun, Skill Development and an introduction to Teamwork and Positional Understanding.

Main Focus U11-12's & 12 Girls: Participation, Fun, Skill Development, Teamwork, Positional Flexibility and an introduction to Game Strategy.

The following broad criteria will be used when determining the placement of players in teams are:

- Creating a balance of first and second year players in each team (U9-10)
- Creating a balance of player skill/ability to best support players new to football
- Ensuring teams are competitive in the division they are located
- Friendship groups (up to 3 names on registration form)
- Player ages
- Playing list size (NFL By-Laws)
- Practicalities such as car-pooling etc.
- Previous Cougars team/involvement (if any)
- School attending (a mix of schools to be represented in each team)
- Auskick centre (U9's)

Player placement will generally remain similar to the same team as the previous year when progressing to the next age level.

Exceptions to this include:

- Player ages (U9 bottom and top age)
- Balancing player numbers (NJFC Guidelines)

Individual written requests from parents for their children to play in a particular team will be accommodated where possible, as long as the balance of player numbers will be maintained and the above criteria are satisfied. Any changes will be effected through negotiations and agreement with the Selection Panel.

Guidelines for U13-17's & U14/16/18 Girls

Main Focus U13-17's & 14/16/18 Girls: Building on the above with a stronger emphasis on the Understanding of Physical Development Needs, Game Strategy, Teamwork, Positional Flexibility and Emotional Development.

This age group will be based on placing players and teams to ensure they play at the most appropriate level where they can be both competitive and continue to develop their football skills.

At this age, it is important that player preferences are taken into account when considering the structure of teams. When submitting preferences (via a short survey), players are encouraged to consider:

- The level of football played at last season
- Skills / strength / stamina

- Level of commitment to attend training and game day matches
- Friendship group (up to 3 names)
- Preferred playing positions

The criteria used when determining the placement of players in teams are:

- Player preferences (as above)
- Development of football skills
- Safety e.g. physical strength and/or size
- Level of competition
- Ensuring teams are competitive in the division they are placed
- Playing list size (NFL By-Laws)

Player attributes to be considered:

- Enjoyment of a range of activities
- Competitive nature
- Dedication
- Self-direction
- Work ethic
- Desire for personal challenge
- A reliance on game sense and teamwork more so than just athletic ability
- The ability to deal with some adversity

As well as the above, the following will be taken into account:

- Pre-season squad training
- Practice matches
- Grading matches

The above will be used to observe: football skills under pressure; ability to read the play; ability to follow instructions; and playing within a team.

Selection Panel:

The club aims to have a transparent process in place with regard to the nominated club personnel involved in player placement. Nominated personnel will be:

- Age level squad coaches
- Coaching Co-ordinator
- Player Placement & Grading Manager

Registration:

In order for a player to be eligible for participation, they must meet the minimum requirement to be a financial member of the NJFC. This includes either being fully subscribed or meeting the minimum standards set in an agreed modified payment plan. Refer to Registration Policy.

Mixed Boy/Girl Teams:

Up to and including the U13 age group, girls are able to nominate to play in an all-girls team or a mixed team. Age group player placement guidelines will apply regardless of gender.

Free Kick Program:

A maximum number of three (3) Free Kick player placements will apply to any one team. Refer to Registration Policy.

Coaching:

Coaches for each age group level will work together as a coaching team to plan and implement a training program in the interests of developing a strong and united squad of players regardless of team affiliation. Refer to Coaching Policy.

Training:

All players within an age group will train together as a squad for a minimum of 50% of total training time. This will allow for a larger coaching pool, exposure to a variety of coaching styles/methods, player and coach familiarity with whole squad, building community spirit, greater ability to address developmental/skills needs, and teams will mix in future seasons. Refer to Coaching Policy.

Captain/Leadership Groups:

All age groups up to and including Under-13's will rotate the captaincy through the team. From Under-14's players will elect captains. Selection of a captain(s) and vice-captain(s) will occur prior to the start of the home and away season by player vote (secret ballot).

Squad/Team Events:

The following club events will be held at the same time for all players of a squad regardless of team affiliation:

- Pizza/Social events etc.
- Photos
- End of Season Presentations

Squad/Team Communication:

- Off-season communication will generally come from the club via email, website.
- Pre-season communication will come from the club until such time as a Team Manager is identified for the Age Level Squad.
- Communications from Age Level Squad Coaches will be forwarded by email from via the Team Manager in relation to training matters and events.
- In-season communication will be forwarded by email via the separate Team Managers for each team.
- Preliminary player placement will be forwarded by email prior to pre-season practice matches via the Team Manager.
- Any changes to the preliminary player placements throughout grading games will be advised via direct contact between the coach and the player/family before being forwarded by email via the Team Manager.
- Final player placement will be forwarded by email from the Team Manager following the grading period. Any changes from the grading round placements will be advised via direct contact between the coach and the player/family before Team notification.
- If a player is unhappy with the placement they can raise the issue in writing to the Player Selection & Grading Manager.

NJFC Rules

Player Placements will be reviewed at the commencement of each season.

Depending on player numbers, players will have the opportunity (at the discretion of the selection panel) to move between teams during the early parts of the season.

Multiple teams in an age group will not be placed in the same division (to allow for smoother player movement between teams as per NFL By-Law V8 4.2.1. II & III).

Players are only to be used for top-up in alternative teams when that team has nineteen (19) or less listed players available.

Rotations between teams after the first four grading rounds will be done more on an 'as needed' basis where injuries and unforeseen circumstances may occur.

Teams will play at the highest level as to be competitive in their division.

Where a team is deemed to be uncompetitive in their division or short on players following the grading period, the Selection Panel can approve changes to player placement to ensure all teams fielded are competitive.

NFL Rules (NFL By-Laws V8)

4.2.1. II. Where a club fields more than one team in the same competitive age group up to under-18, a player is permitted to move between teams during the home and away matches, but once they have played five (5) matches in the higher graded competition team they may not move to the lower graded team for the remainder of the season.

4.2.1. III. Permits are required for movement between teams in the same grade to be lodged as per Schedule 19.

4.3.1. A player must be at least 7 years old as at April 30 in each year to be eligible to be registered with an NFL affiliated club.

4.3.2. A player's age group shall be based on the player's age as at January 1 in each year.

Example: A player's age group shall be based on the age they will be turning in that year. Thus, if a player turns 13 at any stage during the year they are eligible to play in the under-13 competition.

Evaluation and Review

- This policy was reviewed and updated in November 2017 and is scheduled for review in October 2019.

Related Policies/Documents

- NJFC Registration Policy
- NJFC Age Group Policy
- NJFC Rotation Policy
- NJFC Coaching Policy
- NFL By-Laws
- Codes of Conduct