



## Player Grading and Selection Policy

This policy document relates to team composition as well as match playing time and has been developed from the club's philosophy. For the purpose of this document the Technical Director and Coaching Coordinator will be the key figures in the grading process and will be referred to as the "grading coaches" within the document.

### *Club philosophy (This needs work)*

- Be inclusive of players of all ages, gender and skill levels
- Make players feel like it is their club – a second home
- Ensure a players experience of the club is always positive
- Ensure a players experience of the club is the highlight of their week
- Help all players to develop to be the best that they can be, firstly as a person and then as a football player

### *Policy Overview*

- The aim of this policy is to assist players and their parents to understand the clubs process of placing players into a team that best suits their level of ability.
- It is a requirement of the Mount Waverley City Soccer Club that all players wishing to participate in teams from U7's and up, be graded into teams according to their ability. It is the club's policy to grade players every year to ensure that all players have the opportunity to progress. The rationale for this is explained in more detail below.
- The club encourages players and parents not to focus on which team a player is selected in, but rather, on the player's own development during the season. It is also important that parents are supportive of their children during the grading process.
- As a club we follow the FFA's National Curriculum where appropriate, and as such our grading and selection policies are based on ensuring all players are training and playing at the level and in a way that is appropriate for their age and skill level.
- There will not be a single grading session. Instead, the grading coaches will grade players based on input of coaches, what is known about players from the previous season(s), team balance plus performances and behaviours during the early season training sessions. Our training setup, in these early sessions, will allow players to move between training groups in order to assess their mental and physical development when matched against players of different skill levels.

### *Positives and Negatives of Player Grading*

There are some advantages in not grading players, such as maintaining friendships and family social groups; however this soon becomes an issue in several ways.

- **Players benefit most** when the players around them are at a similar level, and a team is most effective when the range of ability between the best and weakest players is as small as possible.
- **Reduced enjoyment** – Players who play in a grade significantly above their skill level will often feel left out, they loose confidence and belief in themselves, as the more skilful players take control of games. Often this can result in the less skilful player leaving soccer in search of another sport.
- **Peer pressure** – Other players often let their feelings be known when it comes down to ability. Our experience is that this often does more damage than any ill feelings resulting from the grading itself.
- **Exodus of talented players** – Players of above average skills and their parents will become frustrated and eventually leave for another club that does grade their players in the hope their child is put into a team with players who are at a similar level to their child.
- **Impaired development** - Players of above average skills will also likely stagnate in a team with much weaker players. Training will need to be simplified for the weaker players and better players are not

therefore challenged to improve to the level they need. This also sometimes leads to the better players becoming a disruption in training as they 'muck' about to entertain themselves.

- Also note: The FFV believes that grading should occur at all ages and grades all leagues in accordance with this belief.

### **Other points to consider :**

- To not grade children based on ability would take away the opportunity for some to progress to representative soccer at a later stage. Soccer is a competitive sport.
- If you would like your child to play at a less competitive level then ask the grading staff and coaches if they can be placed in a lower grade when grading. Requests will be considered and balanced against the well-being of all players at the club, and accommodated as the grading coaches deems such a request to be warranted.
- Re friendship groups. We cannot make grading exceptions based on friendships as this will undermine the whole grading procedure. Children at this age tend to make new friends quickly and this also means that they extend their circle of friends.
- An integral part of grading is the information available about the player from his or her coach in the previous year. The grading staff will seek input from previous coaches regarding player attributes and playing ability. Grading will be conducted early in the pre-season so as to give teams and coaches the maximum amount of time to work together before the season starts.
- Teams will be selected based on skill, attitude and attendance at training. Players and parents need to be aware that from U12 onwards playing position will also be a factor in grading. For example, the ten most skilled players may not necessarily be selected in the same team if they are all strikers or all goalkeepers.

### ***Team Selection and Player Grading Guidelines***

- FFV competitions from U8 to U12 are graded as Kangaroos, Wallabies & Joeys level.
- FFV Competitions for U13 to U18 are graded as A, B, or C, level.
- Grading teams involves selecting a balanced team (in regards to ability and position) from the pool of players in any age group.
- Grading will be conducted by the clubs grading team together with coaches at the specific age group.
- All players from under 8 and upwards will be graded and players will be assigned to teams based on their ability, the position they play where appropriate, experience, as well as the player's welfare.
- Where it applies, team grading will take place pre-season with ideally at least 4 training sessions occurring before preliminary team assignments are made.
- The process involves consultation between grading staff and age group coaches. Grading staff will also consult with parents if it is deemed to be necessary.
- All players, new or returning, will be required to attend these training sessions.
- If at the start of the season there are excess players in an age group or there is no appointed coach, players will be advised ASAP so as to provide them with an opportunity to register at another club.
- Where there are players of similar ability and limited age group vacancies, preference will be given to returning players. Note that returning players must register by the designated registration date to be considered. Returning players cannot expect to turn up after the grading process and assume that a position will be made available.
- Parent coaches always have the right to request that their children are allocated to the team they are coaching (although in this case a parent coach would most likely coach at the level of their child).
- Once grading is complete and teams selected, a player cannot change teams without approval from the grading coaches and team coaches.
- Players may be asked to move up or down grades within an age group due to a player's level of ability or to cover for absent or injured players in other grades, any such movements will be at the advice of the player's coach in consultation with their parents.
- Once assigned to a team, players will train with their respective team and coach.
- Ideally, all teams in an age group will train at the same time to allow interaction between teams as the coaches deem fit. However, this is not always possible as training times are dependent on the schedules of each individual coach as well as ground availability.
- Coaches will meet regularly to discuss their teams and players' capabilities.
- The coaches in any age group are expected to act for the benefit of all players in that age group and not just for the members of their team.
- All players should play in their own age group unless there is a valid reason for playing in an older group (see section on "Playing above your age group"). Up to under 10 more flexibility will be applied in this area. However from under 11 onwards it is expected that the age rules will be strictly adhered to as set out in these procedure.
- During the regular season, players in an existing team may be invited to play in a team in an age group that is higher than their normal age group as a cover player. That player should not displace or deny adequate playing time to the normal rostered players.

- Players who have not paid fees, owe fees from prior seasons, or not registered with the FFV will not be eligible for team selection.

### Team Sizes

- FFV guides suggest that the optimum number of players in a team is three or four more than the number of players on the ground. As a club we have set this limit as follows:

Team numbers by age group are as follows:

Age Group	Field Number	Suggested Squad Size	Ideal Squad size*
U8, U9	7	9-11 players	9
U10, U11	9	11-13 players	11
U12 onwards	11	14-17 players	14

\* The ideal squad size assumes players rarely get injured, sick or miss games for other reasons. If this happens it is only 1 or 2 players maximum at any one time. We are happy to run squad sizes at this number, as long as the team coach and grading coaches agree it is appropriate for the team in question.

Teams at different levels and ages will need different squad sizes. For example, players in year 12 (school pressure) and U18s (increased physicality leads to more injuries) may struggle with small squad numbers. Also teams playing at lower levels tend have more players missing at training and games. The squad size decision will be left up to the grading coaches and team coach to decide, using knowledge about the team and players (from previous seasons) and current information. In a perfect world we would have no more than 2 or 3 players above the field number.

Based on the above, the grading coaches and age group coaches may increase the size of a squad to cater for known situations such as players expected to be away for an extended part of the season or player(s) returning from injury and requiring limited playing time.

In the event of this occurring then all parents and players will be advised of the playing roster and how players will be assured adequate playing time. Where teams are short of numbers some players will be asked to play additional games above their age group. This will be done in consultation with the grading coaches to ensure the player's welfare is fully considered both physical well-being as well as the player's development.

### Grading Appeals Process

- Grading is final. However if a player clearly demonstrates at a later date that they are in the wrong team and at the wrong level, then we will follow the procedure that is in place for players moving up a level / moving to another team.
- The committee will only get involved if there is a question about whether the grading coaches have acted in accordance with club policy and the committee will look at whether the TD has acted appropriately in such cases. Only if this is not the case, will the committee make a decision on whether or not to change the player's grading. In this instance, the Committee's decision is final.

### Playing above your age group

- Mount Waverley City Soccer Club supports the FFV's policy regarding player development which states that it is important that children are constantly challenged or they will get bored. Therefore it is our club policy that if a player has the ability, the club may move them up in playing level after consultation with the child's parent. Alternatively, if a child is finding it difficult in their age group and playing level then it may be necessary to step back to a lower level or a younger age group. This applies up until U11 or with FFV approval for older age groups.
- Players that will be considered for playing above their age group are those deemed by the coaches and grading coaches to be highly skilled, talented and physically capable of playing in a higher level.
- To be considered, players need to be playing comfortably in the highest level at the club for their age group and demonstrate that they can cope with the demands of the higher age group both physically and mentally. Decisions are made based on what is best for the player's development.
- Before moving to a higher age group the player's skills will be assessed by the higher age group coach and the grading coaches. If both coaches agree that the child should be in the higher age group then the move will be discussed with the parent.

### **The disussion process works as follows;**

1. The TD, curent coach and potential new coach all agree that a move is necessary and possible.
2. The current team coach talks to the players and parents about the possibility of moving to a different grade. If there is an agreement from the parents and player to move then:
3. The TD follows up and also talks to the players parents and the player himself. If there is still an agreement to move then:
4. The player starts to train and play with the new team.

The grading coaches and team coach will continually monitor players who have moved up or down in level as to whether they should move back to their original level at any time. If the player at a later point asks to go back to his old team, this will be treated on a case by case basis.

### **Composition of Leagues**

The Small Sided Football (MiniRoos) leagues are self-graded competitions which can be split into a maximum of 3 divisions, Kangaroos, Wallabies and Joeys

- Kangaroos – for experienced / talented players
- Wallabies – for intermediate players
- Joeys – for beginners with limited skills or game experience

Games in Small Sided Football, under 8's/9's/10's/11's, competitions are played without points or ladders.

Junior Teams (U12's and upwards) will play for points and a league table will exist. All teams in these age levels can be split into a maximum of 3 Grades: A, B & C

- The number of teams in each age group will be assessed annually based on factors such as the club's strategic plan and the availability of coaches and grounds.

### **Late Registrations**

Once teams have been finalised with their maximum number of players we will not add any late arriving players to a team and exceed the maximum team size. Should a vacancy arrive in a team, because a player leaves during the season or due to a long term injury etc. then the coach and the grading coaches will assess the situation to determine whether it is necessary to replace that player and determine the grading process to be adopted for that situation.

### **Team Selection during Season**

#### **General Guidelines**

- Team selection will be fair and equal **only if** players attend training in the week before the game or have a good reason for not getting to training, always follow team rules, always demonstrate a good attitude at training and on match day, are reliable on game days, coummnicate absences ahead of time, and always put the team above them selves.
- Team selection will be at the discretion of the team coach (coaching group) and we seek your support to ensure that this policy is maintained.
- Each Game is treat independently in regards to fair game time and this is based on the previous week (training attendance, attitude etc). **Game time is not monitored across the season**
- The grading coaches will monitor matches and training across all teams and make suggestions to coaches about player selection, positional changes and player goals if necessary, but will only get actively involved in selection in exceptional circumstances.

### **Player rotation and Game time during the game**

#### **U12 and above**

#### **General Guidelines**

- Game time will be fair and equal in any give game **only if** players attend training in the week before the game or have a good reason for not getting to training, always follow team rules, always demonstrate a good attitude at training and on match day, are reliable on game days, coummnicate absences ahead of time, and always put the team above them selves.
- Subject to following the general equity guidelines above, player rotation **during the game** remains the coaches' prerogative.
- As long as, and Subject to following the general guidelines above, all players would get equal and fair game time each game.
- As players get older, it is expected that a players position will become more clearly defined and players

will begin to play in more defined roles. However, all players would still be expected to play in a number of different positions during the season and even during a game so as to continue their soccer development (and ensure game time can be shared out equally).

### ***U8 to U11***

- Player rotation (not game time) during the game remains the coaches' prerogative.
- In any given game, all players will have equal game time (unless the coach has good reason (in line with the guidelines above) to not give all players equal time)
- Players will be expected to play in all positions both in games, and at different stages throughout the season.
- Player rotations should take place in a logical and systematic manner which ensures players are not on the side-line for a lengthy time, and ensures game time is equal for all players involved in the game and that this process is transparent.

### ***Grievances & Escalation about Football Matters during season***

- It is expected that there is an open relationship between the coach of a team, the players and parents and that coaching decisions and directions will be conveyed to all.
- The expected behaviour and communication of all parties is set out in the relevant codes of conduct as well as the club's coaching guidelines.
- If a parent feels that a decision is taken which, they feel, unfairly disadvantages their child, either at training or in a game they should in the first instance talk to the team coach and try to resolve the matter. (but only after a 24 hours cooling off period)
- If the matter is not resolved, all parties should contact the grading coaches to discuss the issue. The grading coaches will resolve the matter.
- If the grading coaches are not able to resolve the matter within 10 days, the matter will then be escalated to the club's committee who will review all the facts and make a final decision.
- Where the grading coaches have made a decision which is not satisfactory to all parties, the matter will then be escalated to the club's committee who will review whether the grading coaches have acted in accordance with club policy.
- When exceptional circumstances apply (that is the committee feel the grading coaches have not acted in accordance with club policy), the club's committee has the final say on player grading, team selection and game time decisions.