

# **ST KILDA CITY**

## **Junior Football Club**

Peanut Farm Reserve, Blessington St, St Kilda

Elwood Park, Ormond Esplanade, Elwood

PO Box 1489, St Kilda South, VIC 3182

### **ST KILDA CITY JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB TEAMS POLICY**

**(mixed & boys)**

*2019 policy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure consistency in the formation and operation of mixed and boys teams of St Kilda City Junior Football Club Inc ("the Club")

This Policy has been prepared and adopted by the Executive Committee and is subject to review as deemed necessary by the Executive Committee.

A copy of the current Teams Policy is to be placed on the Club's website.

## 2. BASIS FOR THIS POLICY

During Season 2012, the Club surveyed its parent members in relation to a number of issues concerning how the Club should form and operate teams. The results of that survey, together with South Metro Junior Football League ("SMJFL" or "the League") By-Laws, formed the basis of the Policy developed in 2013. The 2013 policy was then reviewed after the 2017 season and again after the 2018 season.

Being a junior sporting club, it is important that children are satisfied with where and how they play their football. The Club, through the Executive Committee, will therefore consider individual requests in extenuating circumstances which are outside this Policy. The Executive Committee may dispense with this policy in a particular circumstance should it wish to do so.

## 3. BACKGROUND AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The principles underlying the Club's Teams Policy are as follows:

- (a) To ensure our processes and policies are clear and known by players and parents.
- (b) To encourage as many children as possible to play Australian Football.
- (c) To encourage the retention of players in older age groups, and to provide the opportunity for players to play their junior football at the one club and to provide a pathway to senior football.
- (d) To develop the football skills of all children who play with St Kilda City Junior Football Club, regardless of ability.
- (e) To teach sportsmanship, teamwork, discipline, respect and tolerance of others.
- (f) To encourage the development of a team ethic where the contribution of all players is valued equally.
- (g) To provide a safe, caring and fun environment.

The Club aspires to fielding multiple teams in each age group, to maximise participation and competitiveness. This offers the optimal playing environment for players of all standards through all age groups. And from U11 onwards, it strives to field teams in each age group in the highest division where they will be competitive.

These principles fall to be applied in the following circumstances.

The SMJFL has mixed competitions for each year between U8 to U14 and boys competitions for each year between U15 to U17 inclusive.

SMJFL mixed divisions are "partly graded" in U8 to U12, with divisions given names (such as East or West or a colour) that do not directly indicate a hierarchy. From U13 onwards, the mixed divisions are explicitly "graded" and named from Division 1 downwards.

The SMJFL allocates teams to divisions based on their previous year's performance and other factors, including input from clubs. The first four competition rounds are "grading games". When it is apparent that a team is not competitive, the League will regrade that team down to a lower division. When a team is dominant, the League will regrade that team up to a higher division. Clubs have input into this process, with the extent of their influence being affected by the number of poorly performing/over performing teams in each division.

Teams in the mixed U8 to U10 age groups play a modified game with players restricted to zones and “bear hug” tackling only. No score is kept, no ladder is published, and there are no finals as such. From U11 on there are no zones, tackling is allowed, and there is a ladder, finals and a premiership. Typically, teams in the mixed competition are made up almost entirely of boys. But from the U12 level, a score is kept, finals are played and best and fairest votes given.

Most other clubs do not “grade” their own teams (that is, put the best players into one team, or have an “A” and “B” team) in the mixed U8 to U10 age groups. The SMJFL suggested policy, which is not binding on individual clubs, provides for grading in the mixed competition only from U13 onwards. Different clubs have different policies for the U11 and U12 mixed age groups. Quite a few grade at these levels, either completely or to some extent. Clubs that grade at these age groups will typically have teams in the higher divisions and teams that play in the finals and win premierships. Clubs that do not grade at these levels will find it difficult to compete with clubs that do grade, or to field teams in the higher divisions.

The Club recognises that most if not all players play for enjoyment. It also has players of differing skills and abilities and ambitions. Some players obtain their enjoyment simply from participation. Other players get enjoyment also from being part of a successful team and playing at a high standard including in finals matches.

Finally, the Club recognises that if it does not field teams in the higher divisions, some of its (more able) players will likely leave for other clubs and that this will have a detrimental effect on the Club generally as well as the players who remain.

For these reasons there is a balance to be drawn between keeping friendship groups together and focusing simply on participation and forming teams that are competitive and that allow players to play in the highest possible standard competition.

Also, where the Club has more than one team in a particular age group but is not selecting based on performance, a decision must be made whether to keep the players allocated to a team together from year to year, or to mix up the players from season to season. One advantage of mixing up the teams from season to season is that it would allow players to forge new friendships. On the other hand, keeping a playing group together allows the friendships to strengthen, and avoids the complexities, disruption and likely dissatisfactions associated with breaking up established groups.

This Policy differentiates between the three separate processes of: team formation (ie who plays in what team); team grading (ie in what division a team plays in); and how we operate teams (ie player movements between teams, playing times and player positions).

Having regard to all the above, the Club is of the view that:

- In the “younger years”, teams should be formed and operated on the basis of “peer connections” (existing friendships, siblings, school groupings/classes, etc). Subject to the numbers in each team allowing it, playing groups should be kept together from season to season, rather than broken up at the end of each season. The emphasis should be on essentially equal participation by all players to develop all round capabilities and to play in all positions. Winning games is not the priority.
- The change from effectively equal participation to some variation based on performance and the introduction of some emphasis on winning matches should commence to some extent in the mixed U11 age group to allow for the fact that from that time scores and ladders are kept and finals offered, because there is likely increased enjoyment generally if the team is successful within its competition. But there should still be an emphasis on every player having a real and significant level of involvement in each game, particularly the home and away games.
- Where there are multiple teams in the same age group, there is a need to introduce at some stage team selection on the basis of performance rather than on the basis of friendship groups or past team involvement. Players will benefit from playing at a level that suits their abilities or levels of enthusiasm. A player playing at a level where they struggle to contribute or where they feel intimidated will likely lose enthusiasm and fail to improve. Similarly, a player playing at a level that is below their ability will likely also become frustrated, lose enthusiasm and fail to improve.

- The Club has taken the view that the change to team selection based on performance should not take place until the U12 level for the mixed competition. In the “older” age groups (generally U15 to U17) team and individual performances should be the focus whilst ensuring that all who want to play are given a fair and reasonable opportunity to do so and to develop their skills. There should be a greater emphasis on winning.

The policies set out below are intended to achieve these objectives.

## 4. TEAM FORMATION

This Section details the Club's policy with respect to how teams are formed. Some aspects of this Section only apply to situations where the Club fields more than one team in a particular age group.

### 4.1. Number of Players Per Team

#### Mixed competitions

This Section is intended only as a guide to assist the Club in the formation of teams each season. The number of players allocated to a team depends on the Club's ability to move players up an age group to either increase or decrease numbers in teams.

The number of players allocated to a team at the start of the season will be guided by Table 1. Table 1 will mainly apply to player numbers in U8 to U10 teams. It will be used less when forming teams in older age groups, noting that there will generally need to be higher numbers per team in the older age groups, to allow for injuries, private school commitments and the like.

**Table 1: Guide to Number of Players Per Team Per Age Group**

<b>No. of Players in Age Group</b>	<b>No. of Teams</b>	<b>Player Movements to Make Up Numbers<sup>(1)</sup></b>	<b>No. of Players Per Team</b>
15 to 24	1	Move players from younger age group to increase numbers	15 to 24
25 to 29	1	Move players to older age group to reduce numbers (to 24) and/or roster players off each game	25 to 29
30 to 40	2	Move players from younger age group to increase numbers	15-20
41 to 48	2	None	20/21 to 24
49 to 53	2	Move players to older age group to reduce numbers (to 24) and/or roster players off each game	24/25 to 26/27
54 to 59	3	Move players from younger age group to increase numbers	18 to 19/20
60 to 72	3	None	20 to 24
73 to 78	3	Move players to older age group to reduce numbers (to 24) and/or roster players off each game	24/25 to 26
79 to 96	4	Move players from younger age group to increase numbers	19/20 to 24
97+	4	Move players to older age group to reduce numbers (to 24) and/or roster players off each game	24+

(1) In accordance with Age Group Placement of this Policy.

The Club will make every effort to ensure a team has at least 15 players. The Club will not form a team at the start of the season with less than 15 "regular" players. When this occurs, the Club will make every effort to either form an amalgamated team with a neighboring club(s) or to place players in a team(s) with a neighboring club(s).

Where player numbers in a team exceed 24, players will be rostered off each week to ensure a maximum of 24 players play each week. This ensures that player's playing time and rotations can be in accordance with those detailed in Section 10 Minimum Playing Time and Section 11 Rotation Guidelines of this Policy. The Coaches are responsible for ensuring fairness and equity in rostering players off each week and will keep appropriate records.

Where player numbers are less than 21 (either permanently or on an ad hoc basis), the team can be supplemented by players from other teams in accordance with Section 9 Age Group Placement of this Policy.

## **4.2. Team Formation - Multiple Teams in an Age Group**

This Section applies if there is more than one team in an age group. In these circumstances, teams will be formed each year (as required and where possible and appropriate) on the basis of the following criteria.

### ***U8 mixed***

- (a) Teams will be composed of peer connections and friendship groups, generally on the basis of children from the same class from the same school being in the same team.
- (b) The focus is on playing football with friends.
- (c) Roughly equal numbers of players will be allocated to each team as follows:
  - Up to 20 players per team for mixed: Teams to have equal numbers of players per team.
  - 21 to 24 players per team for mixed: Teams can have up to two more players in a team.
  - 25 or more players per team for mixed: Fill other teams first to 24 (or 21) players, and then alternate between teams to keep numbers even.
- (d) In allocating players to teams, there will be no attempt to assess skill and allocate children on the basis of skill.

### ***U9 to U12 mixed***

- (a) Teams in the mixed competition will generally be carried forward from the previous year.
- (b) Where necessary, team numbers will be adjusted to balance numbers and/or to bring team numbers up to minimum sizes. Any changes needed to address player numbers will be on the basis of placing players who have played the same number of years together where possible, or by catering for peer connections. The President ultimately retains the discretion to decide player allocation depending on his or her assessment of all the circumstances.
- (c) The focus remains on playing football with friends.
- (d) Roughly equal numbers of players should be allocated to each team as follows:
  - Up to 20 players per team for mixed: Teams to have equal numbers of players per team.
  - 21 to 24 players per team for mixed: Teams can have up to two more players in a team.
  - 25 or more players per team for mixed: Fill other teams first to 24 players, and then alternate between teams to keep numbers even.
- (f) In allocating players to teams, there will be no attempt to assess skill and allocate children on the basis of skill.

### ***U13 to U14 mixed AND U15 to U17 Boys***

- (a) Teams will be reformed on the basis of Section 6 Team Selection of this Policy.

## **5. TEAM SELECTION (U13 TO U14 MIXED AND U15 TO U17 BOYS)**

This Section applies only to U13 to U14 mixed and U15 to U17 Boys age groups.

### **5.1. Policy**

Where there are multiple teams within an age group, the Club will “grade” teams on the basis of individual and team performance.

## 5.2. Grading Guidelines

The following guidelines outline the process of "grading" players and teams that will generally be adopted by the Club.

- (a) The Committee will form a Selection Panel, generally comprising suitably qualified and experienced people. The Selection Panel may delegate its functions to a particular individual or individuals.

The Club expects the Selection Panel and any delegate to operate in a fair, even and unbiased manner.

- (b) The Selection Panel will determine the selection criteria and the process to be followed, generally based on the following:
- Pre-season training sessions will be held for the entire squad. Sessions will be observed by the Selection Panel and will generally include:
    - Skills, attitude and fitness development;
    - Intra-club practice match(s)/drills, with players to be played in a variety of positions to enable a full and proper assessment of their skills to be made;
    - Inter-club practice match(s), with players to be played in a variety of positions to enable a full and proper assessment of their skills to be made;
    - Preliminary teams will be selected prior to inter-club practice match(s); and
    - Final teams will be selected prior to Round 1.
  - Team selection is based on a player's ability and team balance. Criteria to be used will generally include:
    - Kicking;
    - Marking;
    - Handball;
    - Vision/awareness;
    - "Clean hands";
    - Competitiveness;
    - "Football smarts"; and
    - Other attributes (including attitude, training attendance, team balance, etc).
  - Where possible, teams will train together for the whole season (subject to coaches' availability), generally as follows:
    - Warm up together;
    - Some drills together;
    - Split for team drills; and
    - Warm down together.
- (c) A player may request to play in a lower-graded team.
- (d) Prior to the first training session, an information session will be held for parents and players.

### **5.3. Team Operation**

- (a) Player game time and rotations are to be in accordance with Section 10 Minimum Playing Time and Section 11 Rotation Guidelines of this Policy.
- (b) Player movement between teams is to be in accordance with Section 8 Player Movement Between Teams.

## **6. TEAM GRADING**

- (a) The Club will work with the League to ensure that teams are appropriately graded by the League.
- (b) The aim is to ensure that teams are competitive in their respective divisions.
- (c) It is the Club's desire to not have teams in the same division, perhaps with the exception of U8 to 10 teams.
- (d) The Club recognises that the League has the final say in the grading of teams.

## **7. PLAYER MOVEMENT BETWEEN TEAMS**

### **7.1. U8 to U11**

Players are expected to play with and give priority to their allocated teams.

Where necessary or convenient to make up sufficient numbers, players may play in other teams either within their age group or in another age group if permitted by the SMJFL By-Laws and if the team managers of the teams agree.

### **7.2. U12 and above**

As part of the grading process, players may be moved between teams by the Selection Panel and where permitted by the SMJFL By-Laws. The Selection Panel may discuss player movements with the coaches concerned.

After Round 4, player movement will generally be limited to filling vacancies caused by injury or long-term absence or to make up team numbers. A limited number of movements between teams maybe made on the basis of merit and in recognition of an improvement in ability. J

## **8. AGE GROUP PLACEMENT**

This Section details the Club's policy with respect to players playing in an age group which is higher than the lowest age group that a player is eligible to play in on the basis of the League's By-Laws (their "current age group").

In all instances, a player will only be permitted to play in an older age group (either permanently or on a temporary basis) if the player and their parent(s) consent to doing so.

### **8.1. Playing in an Older Age Group for the Entire Year**

At the start of each season:

- (a) Players will be assigned to teams within their current age group, except as detailed in this Section.
- (b) Players may ask to be allocated to a team in an age group above the player's current age group as follows:
  - The age group is no more than one age level above the player's current age group;
  - The player's school class is in the older age group, or there is a significant peer connection with the older age group;
  - Parent consent is provided to the Club;
  - The player is assessed by the Club as being capable of playing in the older age group; and

- The movement of the player will not result in either the older age group having more than 21 players or the current age group having less than 21 players.
- (c) Players may be asked to be allocated to a team in an age group above the player's current age group as follows:
- The older age group requires more players to achieve 21 players per team;
  - The player's current age group has more than 21 players per team;
  - The age group is no more than one age level above the player's current age group;
  - The player is assessed by the Club as being capable of playing in the older age group; and
  - Parent consent is provided to the Club.

## 8.2. Playing in an Older Age Group on a Temporary Basis

During the season, players may be asked to play for a team above the player's current age group on a temporary (match by match) basis as follows:

- The older age group requires a player(s) to bring the number of players to 21 for the match;
- The player first fulfils their game requirements with their current age group team, unless with the express consent of the player's current age group team's coach;
- The age group is no more than one age level above the player's current age group;
- Parent consent is provided to the Club;
- The player is assessed by the coaches of both teams as being capable of playing in the older age group;
- The player plays no more than the minimum amount of game time played by players of the older age group team. All other aspects of Section 11 Player Rotation Guidelines of this policy apply, within the limits of the younger age group player's ability;
- The younger age group player will not be eligible for best and fairest votes, but will be eligible for any weekly award given in accordance with the Club's Awards Policy;
- The younger age group player will not receive an end of season award (including certificate) for the older age group;
- If the "play up" game is before the player's regular team's game:
  - The player's regular team's coach's consent is required; and
  - The coach of the older age group team must ensure that the younger player is not fatigued through rotating the player, not playing in a prominent position, etc. This does not apply if the younger player is not required to play in the later game with the regular team (and has the express consent of the player's current age team's coach).

## 8.3. Playing Across an Age Group on a Temporary Basis

During the season, players may be asked to play across their age group on a temporary basis to make up team numbers. This will be undertaken in accordance with the SMJFL's By-Laws (as detailed in Section 8 Player Movement between Teams of this Policy) and the following:

- Playing across their age group does not affect their regular team;
- The express consent of the player's regular team's coach is provided;
- Players can only play one game per week in their current age group;
- Parent consent is provided to the Club;
- All aspects of Section 11 Player Rotation Guidelines of this Policy apply;
- The "temporary" player will not be eligible for best and fairest votes, but will be eligible for any weekly award given in accordance with the Club's Awards Policy;



- The "temporary" player will not receive an end of season award (including certificate) for the older age group; and
- The welfare of the player is not compromised.

## 9. MINIMUM PLAYING TIME

### 9.1. Regular Season

- (a) Subject to Section 10.3 Player Application to the Team, players in each team shall play the following minimum amount of time each week during the fixtured season:

**U8 to U11 mixed:** Minimum three quarters per game and so far as possible rotating players such that they play an equal number of quarters over the season (subject to players missing games).

**U12 mixed** Minimum three quarters per game. It is not necessary that each player play an equal number of quarters over the season

**U13 to U14 mixed:** Absolute minimum two quarters. Preferred minimum three quarters.

**U15- U17 mixed:** At the coach's discretion - an absolute minimum one quarter, preferred minimum two quarters.

In applying this aspect, Coaches are to be cognisant of the need to ensure player retention through an appropriate amount of game time.

- (b) To ensure these minimum playing times occur, interchanging of players during quarters is discouraged (except for injury reasons) in U8 to U12.

### 9.2. Finals Matches

- (a) Subject to Section 10.3 Player Application to the Team, players in each team shall play the following minimum amount of time each week of finals matches:

**U8 to U10 mixed:** Half total game time over the Lightning Carnival.

**U11 to U14 mixed:** Minimum two quarters.

**U15 to U17 mixed:** All players must get time on ground

In U15 to U17 the length of time on ground is at the coach's discretion as the intention is to give the team the best possible chance to win during finals.

- (b) The SMJFL By-Laws allow no limit on the number of players on the interchange bench in finals matches (U11 to U17). The Club's position is that all players who have qualified to play finals matches in accordance with the League's By-Laws will be allowed to play finals for their team.

### 9.3. Player Application to the Team

- (a) Coaches are permitted to reduce the minimum playing times of individual players should those players exhibit poor application to the team, ie a poor record of attendance at training and/or matches (without valid reasons) or a poor attitude at training and/or matches.
- (b) When this occurs, coaches are to explain to the player (and the player's parent(s) if appropriate) the reason for doing so.

## 10. PLAYER ROTATION

### 10.1. Policy

It is the Policy of the Club that in the U8 to U10 mixed age groups, players will develop all-round skills through non-specialisation in positions played, ie they shall play in all positions across the

season. In the U11 and U12 mixed age group, players will begin to specialise, but versatility remains an essential feature of a player. In the older age groups, players will be more specialised in the positions that they play.

In implementing this Policy, the Coach is to consider each player's ability, physical attributes and application to the team at training and during games.

## **10.2. Rationale**

A key factor in the development of a player is their ability to play in multiple positions. Teams benefit from having players who can play in multiple positions and can fulfil multiple roles.

Also, children enjoy playing multiple positions. Regular positional changes improve players' and teams' adaptability and versatility. Equitable rotations and playing times in the "younger" age groups are critical for the long-term strength of each age group.

## **10.3. Player Rotation Guidelines**

The following guidelines are provided to assist coaches implement this policy and to ensure consistency between the Club's teams. Further assistance to Coaches in implementing this Policy is available through the Club's Coaching Director.

Player rotations generally occur through each of the following "lines" on the football field (or zones in the case of U8 to U10 mixed):

- Back line: Full back and half back lines
- Forward line: Half forward and full forward lines
- Midfield: Centerline and followers

### ***Rotation by Age Group***

#### U8 to U10 mixed:

- All players rotate through all three zones in every game by playing at least one quarter of playing time per zone.  
Or:  
All players play one zone in each game; and  
All players play all three zones in each three games.
- Interchanges during quarters are discouraged as this does not allow a player enough time to learn how to play a position.

#### U11 to U14 mixed:

- Players may spend more time in a "primary" position, but still playing in multiple positions throughout the course of the season to develop versatility. For example:
  - Play one line for two or three games, and then change lines; or
  - Generally play across two lines, with the occasional game in the third line.

#### U15 and Above:

- The positioning and rotation of players is at the coach's discretion.
- Generally, players play the same line each week, but with some rotations to ensure player development and player retention.

#### **10.4. Player Positions and Rotations During Lightning Carnivals (U9 and U10 mixed only)**

It is Club Policy that during Lightning Carnivals player positions and rotations are to be in accordance with Section 11 Player Rotation of this Policy.

#### **10.5. Player Positions and Rotations During Finals (U11 to U17 mixed and only)**

- (a) It is Club Policy that during finals player positions and rotations should give the team the best possible chance to win.
- (b) The Coach has full discretion on running the team on finals match days, aside from the minimum playing times for finals specified in Section 10 Minimum Playing Times of this Policy.

### **11. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY**

This Policy will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Executive Committee.

### **12. POLICY COMMENCEMENT**

This Policy was adopted by Executive Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019