



GREENSBOROUGH JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

Team Selection Policy

1. Purpose

This document outlines the process Greensborough Junior Football Club (GJFC) will follow to select teams when the club is able to field **more than one team at a particular age group**. The policy aims to provide a clear and detailed framework with the objective that the team selection process is conducted openly, fairly, effectively and collaboratively and in a manner that considers the best interests of the individual, team and club.

2. Scope

This policy applies to committee members, players, coaches, coordinators and parents. It only applies where the club has multiple teams in the same age group.

3. Background

In 2008, the Australian Football League—in collaboration with state football bodies and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC)—developed the Next Generation Australian Football Match Policy to cover the conduct of the game for players aged 5-18 years. This policy was based on a large body of generic research into best practices for children's sports, which had been accumulated over time.¹

The Australian Football Match Policy sets out the framework in which junior state leagues should endeavour to provide pathways that follow these principles:

- **Sequential** – progressions that link
- **Developmental** – meets the needs of children
- **Informed** – by research, practice and stakeholder engagement
- **Inclusive** – accommodates all people in an equitable manner

¹ Australian Football Match Policy p.8

These principles are underpinned by the need for a quality environment where young players can sequentially develop their skills through activities, games, match rules and conditions that fit their stage of learning and ability.²

GJFC has developed a team selection policy that we consider aligns with these principles and responds to the NFNL's plan to introduce league best and fairest counts from U11 upwards.

4. Guiding Values

When developing a team selection policy, it is impossible to foresee every challenge and have a documented plan in place to deal with it. Hence, the values that underpin the process are a vital tool and will act as a reference point where a decision needs to be made.

These values are as follows:

- Ensuring first-year U9 and U10 players—and, where possible, new players in older age groups—have a minimum of 1 friend in their team.
- If multiple teams in an age group, the goal will be to keep numbers even.
- Offering all players opportunities to develop and extend skills and friendship groups while working together for the benefit of the team and club.
- Fielding competitive teams in multiple divisions.

5. Key Considerations in Team Selection

Team selection is a complex process based on many factors. Whenever there are multiple teams in an age group, there will always be challenges to overcome—and sometimes there will be a need for compromise and flexibility.

When selecting teams, the club will take the following into consideration:

- GJFC does not encourage or support the building of teams **solely** around particular school or friendship groups.
- While we try to accommodate parent and friendship requests in all age groups, we cannot guarantee we can achieve this.
- The child of the coach, one assistant coach will always be selected to play in the team that their parent is involved with.
- U9 and U10 teams will not be based on skill or ability. The focus will be on balancing numbers, friendships, talent and birth years across the group as best as possible.

² Australian Football Match Policy p.9

- If there are multiple teams in the same age group **from U11 upwards**, when selection decisions are made, the aim will be to ensure all teams in that age group can - on paper, at least be competitive in their respective division.
- The GJFC goal around team selection is for all players to play in competitive teams and be given the best opportunity to develop and enjoy playing the game. Players placed in teams and/or divisions beyond their current playing ability tend to be stifled in their game development both emotionally and physically (they tend to end up with less game time), it also puts undue pressure on coaches and team mates.
- Selection will happen each year to reflect the development of players from season to season.
- There are sometimes other extenuating or other confidential circumstances that need to be taken into account during the selection process. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis and try to ensure we deliver outcomes that are in the best interest of the child or family.

6. Policy (Under 9s to U10s)

Where the club is able to field multiple teams in these age groups, team selection should be undertaken with an emphasis on enjoyment and participation with friends. Coaches and Team Managers should be actively involved in the process of team selection and will be supported by the Football Director and the Coaches' Coordinator.

U9

The emphasis at this level is on the development of basic game skills and fundamental game-play concepts. When working with teams in this age group, coaches should aim to conduct training collaboratively. All teams should:

- train together (for at least part of training) and all coaches should be involved in the group training sessions to ensure growth of coaches as well as players.
- promote a one-club culture.
- The aim will also for teams to be mixed each year to help grow friendship groups within each age group

Where the club is able to field multiple teams, team selection should be undertaken with an emphasis on enjoyment and participation with friends. However, please note that friendship groups are often based around school groups that may include players of different ages (i.e., children turning 7, 8 or 9 during the playing season). Therefore, when selecting teams at U9, the impact on subsequent years will also be taken into account.

U10

The emphasis at this level remains on the development of basic game skills and fundamental game-play concepts. When working with teams in this age group, coaches should aim to conduct training collaboratively. All teams should:

- train together (for at least part of training) and all coaches should be involved in the group training sessions to ensure growth of coaches as well as players.
- promote a one-club culture.

Where the club is able to field multiple teams in this age group, team selection should be undertaken with an emphasis on enjoyment and participation with friends. All Coaches and Team Managers should be actively involved in the process of team selection and will be supported by the Football Director and the Coaches' Coordinator.

U11 – U12

The emphasis at this level should be on a combination of:

- enjoyment
- begin selection on appropriate division/team according to development
- participation with friends
- the consolidation of basic skills, and
- further development of technical and tactical gameplay.

Where the club is able to field multiple teams in the same age group, it is essential that the teams train together for at least part of the training session and that the coaches continue to promote a one-club culture. The recommendation is that players warm up together and spend at least 30-minutes of training working jointly on skills. In this situation, we will follow the approach to team selection outlined in section 7.

7. Policy (Under 13s to U17s)

The emphasis in these age groups should be on learning how to train and consolidate the basic skills. Players will begin to be introduced to advanced technical and tactical skills, including:

- decision-making in games and training,
- positional skills (competency in a position)
- basic performance-enhancing techniques, e.g., warm-up, cool-down, nutrition, hydration, recovery, goal setting, pre and post-match routines.

Where the club is able to field multiple teams in the same age group, it is essential that the teams train together for at least part of the training session and that the coaches continue to promote a one-club culture. The recommendation is that players warm up together and spend at least 30-minutes of training working jointly on skills.

It is important for players in this age group to feel an essential part of the team so they can develop self-efficacy, self-worth and a connection with the community, club and team. Commitment and loyalty to the club and team and social responsibility on and off the field, in line with adult standards, should be engendered and acknowledged.

At GJFC, we want to provide the opportunity and environment for players at all levels to be both competitive and continue to develop their football skills. We are committed to grouping players at similar levels of development, which will allow them to achieve specific individual goals that we believe will lead to increased self-esteem and long-term participation in the game.

Where we are able to field multiple teams in the same age group, we will implement an approach to team selection that ensures all players are placed in an environment that provides them with the best possible opportunity to develop. For some, this will mean giving them the opportunity to play at the highest level possible, develop new skills and test them in a highly competitive and supportive environment. For others, this will mean providing a supportive environment in which they continue to develop their skills while retaining and growing their love for the game.

The club policy will also be to cap numbers at 24 per team – however, if the coach believes they can manage more players, then up to 28 will be allowed, though this decision will need to be made prior to the final selection of teams to ensure the additional numbers are playing at the right level. This may mean that players will need to be rostered to miss games during the season. In this case, no player will miss a second game until each player has been rostered off.

How teams will be selected

At these age groups, players will be assessed on the following criteria during pre-season:

- Team Balance (e.g. for instance, there is little point in selecting 24 players who are all midfielders—each side needs a ruckman, backs, forwards and ball getters);
- The previous season's performance (votes, general performance, attitude, attendance at training (advice can and will be sought from the previous season's coach).
- The ability of the player. This is not just a consideration of skill alone but also their in-game confidence and decision-making
- What position(s) they play/or wish to be considered for.
- Whether the player may be better served playing at a lower level to improve their skills, confidence or decision-making, or perhaps just play in their preferred position.
- The player's:
 - Overall ability to contribute to the team at a particular level

- Work ethic
- Fitness
- The player’s skills will also be assessed through a combination of skills work, small-sided games and short intra-club friendlies.

Players and parents should also note that the team selections may change from year to year—the success of a team in a particular year does not necessarily mean they will remain together the following year. Due to the nature of change, new registrations and the differing development rates of all players from season to season, player movement in and out of such teams may still occur to ensure the teams remain competitive at their respective levels.

Playing with friends

It is natural for players to want to play with their friends, and we will endeavour to take this into account where possible—though this may be difficult when the players have different skills and development needs. This will be at the discretion of the coaches and the final decision will be made by the football director.

The selection process

Where the club is able to field multiple teams in a particular age group, the selection process for teams will begin at the start of pre-season (early February) and conclude after any inter-club practice games that have been arranged. According to NFNL by-laws, a player can still move between teams if they have played less than 5 games, so any adjustments to the make-up of teams can still be made during the early grading games of the season, should they be necessary.

The selection panel

When selecting teams, we feel it is important to strike a balance between past performance and the requirements of the team for the coming season. We are also committed to selecting teams through a fair and transparent process. The team selection panel will therefore include:

- Last season’s coaches
- Current season’s coaches (if different)
- The football director or their nominee (can be an external party)

From time to time, the club may also invite independent representatives to assist with the team selection process.

Where a conflict of interest exists (i.e., the child of a member of the team selection panel) that member may not assess his or her own child or decide what team they should play in. In this situation, the player’s ability will be assessed and placed in a team by other members of the panel.

New Players

When a new player registers to play for any team in these age groups, they will be asked if they have played Australian Rules Football before and, if so, at what level.

If the registration occurs prior to the team selection process, they will go through the same process as existing players. If they register too late to join the process, they will be assessed during the early games of the season and may be moved to another team if the team selection panel feels they should be playing at a higher or lower level.

We will endeavour to place new players with at least one friend where possible. In the event that there is no consensus, the football director will make the final decision and will also take into consideration the number of players in each team.

Communication of teams

The outcomes of team selection will be emailed to players and parents prior to the first grading game of each season. In the following circumstances, players will be contacted directly by a representative of the club, usually their coach:

- If they are no longer playing in the higher-level team
- If they have a specific request that has not been met

8. Raising a concern about the selection outcome

Parents with questions or concerns about the selection outcome should contact the club's football director. He or she will ask the relevant coach to make contact and discuss how the selection was made.

Should the matter remain unresolved, the football director will act as a mediator to find a resolution that is in line with the guiding principles of the selection process. His or her decision will be final.

9. Key Responsibilities and Authorities

It is the responsibility of all players, parents and volunteers to behave and communicate in a respectful manner and abide by the club's code of conduct.

The Football Director is responsible for:

- Overseeing the team selection process.
- Providing coaches and coordinators with player details required for selection; and
- Forming the selection panel and receiving and endorsing recommendations from coaches regarding team selection.
- Assigning new registrations to an appropriate team.

Coaches are responsible for:

- Working collaboratively to select teams in accordance with these guidelines and the principles outlined in the Coaches' Code of Conduct.
- Assessing skills against set criteria and documenting them on the form provided.
- Addressing parental concerns and elevating these to the football director if unresolved.

Parents are responsible for:

- Alerting Committee, Coaches or Coordinators to any details they think should be considered when placing their child in a team; and
- Advising Committee, Coaches or Coordinators if they do not require siblings in the same age group to be aligned in the same division.
- Raising any concern, they may have about the selection process as outlined in section 7.

10. Modification and Review

The contents of this document represent the current policy and procedures of Greensborough Junior Football Club. The policy will be reviewed and updated (where appropriate) annually. Any amendments will be communicated to members.

- This policy is subject to annual review and will be appropriately amended as necessary
- Amendments will be communicated to members as and when appropriate.

11. Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Reference
1	02 October 2022	Draft	V0.2
2	27 Nov 2022	Final	V1.0
3	12 Oct 2023	Draft	
4	20 Oct 2023	Final	V2.0

APPROVAL

Approved by the GJFC Executive Committee

Date – 20/10/2023