



St Ives AFL Player Management

Major Sponsor



1 Player Management

The following guidelines are provided for all team coaches as a practical interpretation of our Club's coaching philosophy. The Club's coaching philosophy has four broad components:

- Development
- Involvement
- Fun
- Respect

A description of these elements is contained in Section 3.

1.1 Player Selection

The way in which players are selected for teams varies with the type of competition played.

1.1.1 Non Divisionalised Competitions (U9 – U10)

The primary goal in these age groups is to learn to play the game.

Winning or losing is secondary to the development of children as footballers and team members. To that end the selection criteria for teams should include:

- When there are enough players to field two or more sides in an age group players should be divided into equally competitive teams at the start of the season.
- Friendship groups should be considered as part of team selection, but should not take precedence over the goal of selecting equally competitive teams.
- Teams should remain as a group for the duration of the season unless circumstances dictate otherwise.
- The role of Team Captain should be rotated to provide all players an experience in leading the team, alternatively a "leadership group" can be an option for the older grades at the discretion of coaches.

1.1.2 Divisionalised Competitions (U11 – U17)

The Club's aim is to provide the best playing experience possible for all players, which means selecting players for the team most suited to individual ability, skills and attitude. This is especially important for players at each end of the talent spectrum.

- Where there is more than one team in an age group, the coaches will select teams on merit, taking in to account ability, fitness, attitude, skills, and the overall needs of each team.
- Flexibility to move non restricted players between divisions during the season may be important in order to maximise participation. For example, it may be necessary to move a player from one team to another in order to avoid a forfeit.

- Rotating players between divisions is also appropriate when a player is likely to benefit from a personal development perspective, or where issues of fitness, player discipline, attitude etc need to be addressed.
- Coaches should ensure that players are given a full and frank explanation for selection decisions. Their decisions should be fair and just, and communication to the players and parents should be clear and concise.
- Ideally all age group coaches should contribute to the selection process.

1.1.3 Age Group Eligibility

It is the expectation of St Ives AFL that players play in their correct age group. There may be circumstances where a talented player will be allowed to play up one (1) age group, but this should not be to the detriment of their existing age group, and it must be agreed by the coaches and managers of both the current and higher age group that they are seeking to play, as well as the **VP Football Operations**. Playing up an age group needs to be very selective.

1.2 **Match Day Player Participation Policy**

1.2.1 Junior (U9 - U12)

Every effort should be made to ensure that all players have the opportunity to play as much football as possible in relation to:

- The number of games played in a season.
- The on field playing time each week.
- Opportunity to be involved in the game whilst on the field.
- Players should be rotated through different positions to expand their knowledge of the game and positional play.
- Ideally all players should be given equal time on the field. Some flexibility may be appropriate in U12s with regard to finals , but care and good judgement must be exercised when overplaying and underplaying team members. Doing so may result in the loss of players in future seasons and mean that the Club cannot field as many teams. The sport is more about fun and participation than it is about winning in Junior age groups.
- All players must have been on the field prior to half time and preferably by the beginning of the second quarter.
- It is recommended that team managers or coaches keep a record for every game of approximate time on the field for all players as an aid to ensuring that players get equal time on the field. It may also be useful in handling parent grievances.

1.2.2 Youth (U13 - U17)

All Youth age group competitions are competitive. While we should always do our best to win games this should never come at the expense of maximising participation for all players

in a team. Our rationale is that if a player is included on the team list then they are a part of the team and deserve as much time as anyone else.

Player specialisation tends to increase in youth age groups, either due to personal preference or playing style, or because of a particular need within a team. Despite this tendency coaches are encouraged to move players away from their comfort zone from time to time for the benefit of the player or for the benefit of the team, for example, in order to rest an exhausted teammate or to provide a tactical shock/ change of dynamic around the oval. A balance between player specialisation and moving players around will also add to the experience of individual players, and may help them at Representative level, where adaptability is seen as an advantage.

As with all team sport coaches should aim to develop a sense of sportsmanship and team play, in addition to improving skills and game sense.

1.3 Player Rotation Between Teams - Divisionalised Age Groups (U12 – U17)

Where player numbers allow, and subject to Restricted Player Lists, the Club encourages rotation of players between teams in different divisions of the same age group as a way of enhancing player development. Rotating a player from one team to another may be a one off event or it may be done on a regular basis, depending on whether or not coaches think it will benefit the players and the teams involved.

Rotating a player from a higher division team to a team in a lower division provides opportunities for leadership in terms of on field play and skills, and may be useful to consolidate a player's confidence in a slightly less competitive environment.

Rotating a player from a lower division team to a team in a higher division provides an opportunity to gain experience and develop skills in a more competitive environment.

In both cases it is intended that rotation will enhance an individual player's development and experience, which they may then take back to their own team.

1.4 Player Rotation between Age Groups

Players are permitted to play for a team in a higher age group. Coaches should always consider a player's safety and seek parental permission before agreeing to a player from a lower age group playing in a team in a higher age group.

This strategy can be used as a way of boosting team player numbers, or to provide a development opportunity for the younger player. Existing team members should not be penalised by the inclusion of a younger player, no matter how talented.

A fill in player should be used to fill gaps, not to sit existing team members on the bench.

1.5 Selection for Finals

It is generally recognised that finals football is different from the home and away games. Selection for finals games should encompass the following principles:

- An opportunity for as many players as is possible to experience finals football.
- An understanding that player selection and playing time for individual players gives the team the best possible opportunity to win.

- An understanding that within finals coaches have greater scope for varying playing time for individual players.

1.6 Description of Divisionalisation

The Club's long term goal is to run at least one team in each division in each divisionalised competition. This will allow the Club to provide a playing experience and level of competition best suited to most individual players.

With current player numbers the aim is try to place each team in the division most suited to its overall strength. The division in which a particular team is best suited is strongly influenced, but not solely, by the level of ability of the bottom half dozen or so players.

AFL Sydney Juniors have implemented a Divisionalisation Sub Committee who have ultimate responsibility in determining the division that nominated teams are allocated to. The decision is based on many factors including (but not restricted to) past results, recruiting, geographic factors etc.

While all Youth age group AFL is competitive, the following general descriptions are provided to give coaches some idea of the type of players for which each division is intended.

1.6.1 Division 1

Highly competitive. Best suited to players who are talented, committed and passionate.

1.6.2 Division 2

Very competitive. Most suited to less talented but developed players, smaller talented players, or bigger players with emerging talent.

1.6.3 Division 3

While still competitive, often considered more social, and a great nursery grade for new players. Most suited to players who want to play at a social level with their mates, or to players who are new to the game, or with emerging skills or coordination, or who are undersized.

1.7 Professional Conduct

- Players must always be addressed in a controlled and positive manner.
- No offensive language or cultural, sexist or racist references will be tolerated.
- Coaches are not to involve themselves in negative dialogue with opposition, coaches, officials, players or spectators.
- Coaches and team managers are responsible for the conduct of their officials, players, and team parents, and any issues arising should be addressed by the manager and coach ASAP.
- Coaches must report any inappropriate behaviour by any player, official or spectator whom they believe has behaved in a manner which reflects badly on the Club, as soon as possible to a member of the Club's committee.

1.8 Guidelines for High Numbers in Age Group Squad

In the situation where an age group has too many players for one (1) team, but not enough for two (2) teams, it is important to communicate the approach to both the parent and player groups as soon as registration numbers indicate such. The approach should be based on fair and just principles, and equal participation by all players.

These principles primarily refer to a situation where there are more players in the squad than are allowed to participate in a game, but can also be referenced when the squad number is on the limit. For example, in youth age groups where the teams are allowed 18 on the field and 6 on the bench, so if a squad has upwards of 24 players.

Some guiding principles.

- A **roster** should be drawn up for games off, and ALL players must be part of that. No player should get priority over others no matter of capability. The Manager should ensure open and constant communication with the parent and player groups on the approach and any changes to the roster, commencing prior to the start of the season with regular communication with players and parents throughout the season. The roster should be presented to and discussed with **VP Football Operations** before commencement of Round One.
- The roster may change during the season due to injury, availability or wet weather, but should work out evenly for all players over the season.
- Unavailability of a player due to injury or other circumstances is **not** counted as a rostered game off.
- Each age group should make best friends with the age group above, with the intent to play some players up when they can to alleviate the burden on asking players to sit out. This may mean playing some of your better players up and missing the game in their correct age group, but overall, this is preferred to players missing playing footy at all.
- **Finals** rostering is primarily based on coach selection, however no player should miss more than one (1) final in a potential three (3) week final series. This can be achieved by selecting bottom players and rostering them through the potential three (3) finals. For example, if you have 25 in the squad available to play finals, and 24 are allowed in each game, then the players rated 23-25 can each be rostered off for one of the potential finals. All players should have the opportunity to play a final if the team plays all 3 finals.
- Any movement outside of these guidelines must be discussed and agreed with the **VP Football Operations** and the **Club President**.