

AFL Youth Match Program

15-18 years

18-a-side: community club and school competitions

Purpose

The emphasis at this age level is to optimise the development of players' fitness levels and their individual, positional and team skills. Higher level competition skills should be developed and appropriate competitions provided to enhance players' learning and their chances of being identified for talent pathway programs.

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

Spirit of the game

Before the start of play and at the end of the game, all players, coaches and umpires should shake hands.

The spirit and intention is to ensure all games are played in a competitive and fair manner, in an environment that:

- › permits a player whose sole objective is to contest and gain possession of the ball to do so in a safe and fair manner;
- › rewards and acknowledges commitment and loyalty to the team, club and school;
- › allows all players to feel an essential part of their team, while enabling each individual to develop self-efficacy, self-worth and an identity within their community, team, club and school; and
- › engenders and reinforces community values and social responsibility.

The player whose sole objective is to contest the ball must be permitted to do so. Ethically, it is the responsibility of coaches to provide the best possible teaching and learning conditions. Therefore, the use of negative defensive tactics, where the opposing player's sole objective is to prevent a player from gaining possession, is strongly discouraged at this age level. It could be argued tactics such as tagging and flooding are elements of the modern game, however, they are detrimental to the philosophy of providing an environment that maximises the desired fairness, fun, speed, skill and competitive elements of the game.

The umpire should at all times:

- › endeavour to apply the rules of the games, while awarding free kicks to players in preference to calling for ball-ups; and

- › understand the spirit and intention of the laws is to ensure that a match is played in a fair manner and to protect players from injury.

Laws of Australian Football

The Laws of Australian Football apply to all matches played in the 15-18 age group.

Order-off rule

To be applied at the umpire's discretion, or by the competition's controlling body where applicable. Bad language, poor sportsmanship and disputing umpiring decisions should be actively discouraged.

