

AFL Youth Match Program

13-14 years

15-a-side or 18-a-side: community club and school competitions

Purpose

Learning how to train and consolidate the basic skills is the focus at this age level. Advanced technical and tactical skills start to be introduced, including decision-making in games and training, positional skills (competency in a position), and basic performance-enhancing techniques, e.g. warm-up, cool-down, nutrition, hydration, recovery, goal-setting, pre and post-match routines.

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 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.

Spirit of the game

Prior to the commencement of play:

- › all players, coaches and umpires should shake hands; and
- › the umpire and coaches should ensure players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the game.

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 or school;
- › allows all players to feel an essential part of the team while enabling each individual to develop self-efficacy, self-worth and an identity within the community, their team, club or school; and
- › fosters 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.

Tactics such as **tagging** and **flooding** are elements of the modern game, however, they are contrary to the philosophy of providing an environment that maximises the desired fairness, fun, speed, skill and competitive elements of the game at this level.

Umpires should at all times:

- › endeavour to apply the laws of the game, awarding free kicks to players in preference to calling for ball-ups;
- › understand the spirit and intention of the laws is to ensure a match is played in a fair manner and to protect players from injury. For this reason restrictions are placed upon **tackling** in this age group.

At the end of the game, all players and coaches should shake hands.

Laws of Australian Football

The Laws of Australian Football apply to the 13-14 age group with the following modifications.

The ball

A size 4 leather or synthetic football made specifically for this age group should be used.

Tackling

Tackling is permitted per the Laws of Australian Football, however:

- › No player shall be deliberately slung, dumped or thrown to the ground in any tackle.

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.

