

# UNDER 8s

## PURPOSE

To provide children with a fun, safe and positive experience through a well-structured match program that considers the maturity level of their motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills.

The emphasis is on the development of fundamental movement skills (ABCs of athleticism – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed) and basic game specific skills (kicking, handballing, marking, and gathering). The match program for this age group provides an introduction of basic roles (forward, centre and back) and tactical principles of gaining possession, moving forward, disposal to a teammate.

## SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Before the commencement of play:

- » all players, coaches and umpires should gather on the ground and shake hands
- » the umpire and coaches should ensure that players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the conduct of the game

The spirit of the game is to give all available players a game of football. Therefore:

- » where difficulty occurs fielding full numbers, both coaches must agree to even up player numbers
- » excess players on one team should be given to the opposition team if they are unable to field the required numbers
- » coaches should consider modifying the numbers per side to ensure all players participate (for instance, if planning 9-a-side but only 12 players in total are available: play 6-a-side. Or if 30 players are available, simultaneously play two games of 6-a-side, or one 9-a-side game with one 6-a-side game)

The umpire should at all times:

- » endeavour to apply the rules of the games whilst preferring to award kicks to players in preference to calling for “ball-ups”.
- » understand that the spirit of AFL Junior match rules for this age group is to enable all players to gather possession and that “The player in possession of the ball should be given every opportunity to kick or handball”. For this reason, restrictions are placed upon body contact (refer to Contact/Tackling).
- » attempt to involve all players as the opportunities arise, particularly when indicating which players are to receive a “free kick” upon the ball being kicked out of bounds and ensuring the effective rotation of players through the three zones of play.
- » enforce the “full possession rule” at all ball ups (see below).

## MATCH PROGRAM

### THE BALL

A synthetic size 1 football should be used.

### PLAYING TIME

The playing time should be reduced to what is appropriate for the age of the players.

- » **AFL Auskick Program** – It is recommended that grid games be played for a total of 12 – 20 minutes with regular breaks when required.
- » **AFL Junior Fixture** – Maximum of 4 x 10 minute quarters with no time on.

### THE TEAM

- » **Six-a-side means:** 2 forwards, 2 centres, 2 backs + reserves
- » **Nine-a-side means:** 3 forwards, 3 centres, 3 backs + reserves
- » **Twelve-a-side means:** 4 forwards, 4 centres, 4 backs + reserves
- » Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play at least three quarters of the match.
- » Rotate players every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions, i.e. players to change from one zone to another and interchange onto the field.
- » Equalise the teams and opponents as much as possible (match sizes, abilities)

### PLAYING GROUND AND OFFICIALS

The size of the playing field should be no bigger than 80m x 60m and divided into three equal zones (thirds) identified by markers or lines on the ground.

This field is a maximum size with flexibility needed depending on the players per team, age and ability level.

A field umpire is needed, there are no boundary throw-ins (no boundary umpires) but two goal umpires are required

### ZONES

Backs are restricted to the back zone. Centres are restricted to the centre zone. Forwards are restricted to the forward zone. Rotate players to provide opportunities in several positions (as above).

### TRANSITION OF BALL

When ball is in transition from the Back Zone to the Forward Zone, it must be touched by a player in the Mid-Zone. Failure for this to occur will see a free kick awarded to the opposition team at the point at which the ball entered the end zone.

### SCORING

Only players who are positioned as Forward Zone players may score.

### THE POSSESSION RULE

The ball is possessed by the act of controlling it by catching it, grabbing it, or laying two hands on it when it is on the ground. Once the ball is possessed, all other players must back off to the side of the player in possession, so that the player may kick or handball uncontested (there is to be no blocking or standing in the pathway of the player in possession). Decide doubtful cases with ball-ups.

In relation to all ball-ups, the full possession rule applies as follows:

- » A player contesting a ball-up may not grab the ball and play on
- » The player must knock, palm or punch the ball to a teammate or open ground, and may not play the ball again until it has either been touched by another player or hits the ground.

### START OF PLAY AND RESTARTING AFTER A GOAL

When all players are inside their own zones, a ball-up is conducted between two centre players of similar height as nominated by the umpire. The umpire should nominate different pairs of players for subsequent ball-ups after goals are scored (Full Possession Rule Applies).

### SCRIMMAGE AND FIELD BALL-UPS

Where a scrimmage develops, unless awarding of a free kick is possible under the spirit of the game:

- » the umpire shall stop play, send players back to their zones and nominate two opponents of approximately equal size to contest a ball-up
- » the nominated players need not be the tallest nor the nearest.
- » full possession at the ball-up is not permitted (Full Possession Rule Applies).
- » players should be encouraged to pick the ball-up and will be penalised for diving on the ball.

### CONTACT/ TACKLING

There is to be absolutely no contact or spoiling whatsoever except accidental and light “shoulder to shoulder” contact while running to and at the ball. Players cannot:

- » hold an opponent with their hands
- » steal the ball or knock it out of an opponent’s hands
- » push, bump or barge another player (incidental contact only is permitted)
- » smother an opponent’s kick
- » shepherd

### COACHES

The Coach is allowed on the ground during play for the sole purpose of providing immediate feedback to players; they must not pressure, instruct or make comment to or about officiating umpires or decisions that they make. The coach must not pressure, instruct or make comment to the opposition team.

At the end of the game all players and coaches should gather on the ground and shake hands. The umpire should also take this opportunity to address the players.

### PREMIERSHIP POINTS

The football match program to be offered to players 5-8 years of age must comply with the modified match program presented in this document with no premiership points, no finals, no ladders, no match results (scores) and no names of players published. Skill clinics and participation carnival days may be held. No representative teams should be selected.

