



AFL CANBERRA

CHANGE TO JUNIOR COMPETITION AGE STRUCTURE FOR SEASON 2007

DOUBLE AGE PROGRESSION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Junior Operations Committee of AFL Canberra has been reviewing for some time the structure of the junior competition with a view to implementing improvements. Our primary objective is to provide a quality experience for all involved, where players enjoy their participation in junior AFL, grow personally by being involved in a team sport and enhance their skills.

We are also committed to increasing participation, raising the overall standard of play and supporting the development of our talented players. While there has been some growth in recent years the rate of increase is not commensurate with that being experienced by other codes, in particular soccer and rugby union. There are also concerns about the extent to which the current competition structure supports talented players to achieve their full potential. The junior structure is only part of the equation but it is a fact that no ACT player has been drafted to the AFL for some years.

The Junior Operations Committee aims to implement improvements that will enable the junior league to grow in an organised and systematic manner, and, at the same time, improve the present inequalities of player ability, physical size and age that are evident in the current structure.

2.0 CURRENT STRUCTURE

AFL Canberra has already implemented major structural changes at the lower ages through the ClubStart program. It is now timely that other changes to the structure are implemented that could assist in increasing player participation at the older ages.

The current single age, one division structure of the competition has been in place for many years and has served the junior AFL competition well. It has,

however, limitations that are restricting growth in numbers. For clubs with enough players to field more than one team, both teams must play against each other in the same division. The single age/one division structure has also led to a competition that at times is unbalanced and can be intimidating for new or developing players. Clubs struggling for numbers, or with a developing player group, are forced to play against much stronger teams.

Statistics show that player numbers between the ages of 12 and 16 have grown by a total of 13% since the year 2000 as shown in Appendix 1. This is about 2% per annum at a time when other football codes, notably soccer, are growing at rates up to 8% per annum.

Whilst it is recognised that the single age/one division structure is not the only impediment to growth, it is considered by AFL Canberra to be a significant contributing factor. Any structural change that increases the ability for the competition to grow must be considered seriously. It is the view of the Junior Operations Committee and the AFL Canberra Board that a move to a double age/multiple division structure will assist with this objective.

3.0 CONSULTATION

A discussion paper on double age progression was issued by AFL Canberra to all of the junior clubs in early 2005 for comment. A number of clubs responded, most comprehensively and with considered thought. Whilst some clubs were concerned about such a radical change, other clubs were very supportive of the proposal.

To assist in the process of looking into the detail of how a double age structure might work in practice, a Double Age Progression (DAP) Working Group was established comprising nominees from junior clubs and representatives of the Junior Operations Committee.

Also, in July 2006, AFL Canberra invited representatives from AFL Brisbane Juniors to present an overview of the Brisbane competition since introducing a double age structure some six years ago. Whilst there were teething problems in the formative years, the Brisbane competition has grown by 100%, and the structure has provided sufficient flexibility to support smaller clubs and accommodate new clubs, whilst enabling the larger clubs to experience continued growth. The statistics show that the new and smaller clubs are growing at a rapid rate.

While members of the working group suggested that the Brisbane growth was related to the success of the Lions, it is the firm view of AFL Brisbane Juniors that this is not the case. The Lions have provided very little support to the Juniors, and in recent years where the Lions have not had success, junior numbers have continued to grow.

AFL Brisbane Juniors support AFL Canberra moving to a double age competition structure and has offered assistance should it be required. Their presentation is available from AFL Canberra Operations on request.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

Following subsequent meetings of the DAP Working Group, the majority view supported the implementation of a revised age structure for the 2007 competition.

The proposal has been put forward to the Board of AFL Canberra and has been endorsed for implementation in 2007.

5.0 THE NEW STRUCTURE

In summary the new structure entails a double age, multi-division competition.

The structure for season 2007 will be:

- Under 16 Division 1 (upper age limit subject to review)
 Division 2
- Under 14 Division 1
 Division 2
- Under 12 Division 1
 Division 2 (subject to further review and comment from clubs)

The intention is for players with higher ability and who have stronger physical presence to play in Division 1, allowing those players who are still developing or of smaller stature to play in Division 2.

The success of the new structure will be dependent on developing and implementing clear guidelines which are fair and not subject to abuse, yet flexible enough to accommodate individual circumstances.

The broad principles, which have been developed into Draft By-Laws in Attachment A, are designed to address the issues raised by clubs through the consultation process that has occurred over the past twelve months. The first draft of the By-Laws was largely based on those developed by AFL Brisbane Juniors, however following input from the DAP Working Group a number of changes have been made that address the current stage of development of AFL Canberra Juniors.

DRAFT CHANGES TO AFL CANBERRA BY-LAWS TO ACCOMMODATE NEW JUNIOR COMPETITION AGE STRUCTURE FOR 2007

1.2 Competition Structure

Separate competitions will be conducted each season to determine the premiership in the following Divisions:

- AFL Canberra Junior Division - Under 16 Division 1
- AFL Canberra Junior Division - Under 16 Division 2
- AFL Canberra Junior Division - Under 14 Division 1
- AFL Canberra Junior Division - Under 14 Division 2
- AFL Canberra Junior Division - Under 12 Division 1
- AFL Canberra Junior Division - Under 12 Division 2 (subject to sufficient player registrations)

An appropriate number of games will be organised for the following levels, with the emphasis being on player development rather than competition:

- AFL Canberra Junior Division – Under 11's (subject to a decision on the Under 12 structure)
- AFL Canberra Junior Division – Under 10's
- AFL Canberra Junior Division – Clubstart Under 9's
- AFL Canberra Junior Division – Clubstart Under 8's
- AFL Canberra Junior Division – Auskick

4.4 Teams

4.4.1 Team Nominations

Prior to the commencement of the 2007 season clubs will be asked to nominate teams in the various age divisions.

- In the situation where a club can only field one team in an age group involving a double age progression, it will initially be left to the discretion of the club as to which division the team is nominated for, but as with all teams this nomination will be subject to review by AFL Canberra Football Operations and the Junior Operations Committee.

- In the event that a club wishes to enter three teams in an age group involving a double age progression, the strongest team should be nominated for Division 1 and the other two teams nominated for Division 2.
- Clubs entering teams in Division 1 will be asked to provide a Restricted Player List of ten (10) players as per Clause 4.4.4.
- During the first four rounds, teams will be assessed on their performance and either elevated to a higher division or relegated to a lower division in accordance with Clause 4.4.3.

4.4.2 Number of Players

The number of on-field and interchange players for each competition shall be determined by the Board or, in the case of the Junior Division, the Junior Operations Committee.

For AFL Canberra Junior **Division 1 and 2** teams the following rules shall apply:

- There will be no restriction on the number of players eligible to play in teams in either Division. Clubs are expected however to avoid excessive numbers in one Division and strive to achieve as many teams as possible. They are also expected to balance player numbers between Divisions. (For example, if there are 30 players nominating for Division 1 and 16 for Division 2, Clubs would be expected to nominate two teams of around 23 players).
- The maximum number of players on the field for each team is Eighteen (18). Interchange benches are expected to be managed so that all players play at least two quarters.
- The Even Up Rule (see Clause XXXX) shall apply in the event that one team (or both) has (have) less than Eighteen players.

The officially appointed umpire will indicate to both team managers the team size for the match on that day, upon receiving team sheets from both managers.

Note: The minimum number of players required for any competitive division is Fourteen (14). Teams failing to field a team of at least 14 players will forfeit.

4.4.3 Team Assessment – Double Age Progression

Teams will be assessed on their performance over the first four rounds of the competition after which a decision will be made by AFL Canberra Operations, in conjunction with the Junior Operations Committee, as to which division the team is best suited.

A team may be elevated to a higher division if it is deemed that their performance was superior for that division and was likely to cause an unbalanced competition in the lower division. In the event that a team is elevated to a higher division, the team will be positioned at the mid point of the ladder of the higher division and adopt the median points and percentage in that division.

A team may also be relegated to a lower division if it is obvious that the team is not coping with the level of competition in the higher division. In the event that a team is relegated to a lower division, the team will be positioned at the mid point of the ladder of the lower division and adopt the median points and percentage in that division.

Team elevations and relegations will only occur within the relevant age group. (eg U16, U14, U12)

4.4.4 Junior Team Player Eligibility – Double Age Restricted List

Clubs nominating teams for Division 1 will be required to submit a restricted player list that includes the names of ten (10) players of higher ability in the age group.

This requirement only applies to those clubs which have two or more teams in the one age group.

Restricted list players are ineligible to play in a lower division.

Essentially the restricted list should include the top ten (10) players in the age group. By way of guidance to clubs it would be expected that the list would include players who:

- Participate in AFL Canberra Development Squads;
- Represent the ACT in PSSA or SSSA teams;
- Talented players who join teams from interstate at the beginning or during the year and have not yet participated in ACT representative duties;
- Other talented players who choose not to participate in representative activities.

Special exemptions will be considered if a club believes a player, who falls within the criteria for the restricted list player but whose date of birth puts him in the bottom half of the age group, should not play in Division 1. A special application outlining the reasons for seeking an exemption may be made to AFL Canberra Operations to have the player assessed.

All other players will be free to play in any division but will be subject to finals eligibility criteria.

4.4.5 Penalties

The success of the double age structure is dependent upon the cooperation of clubs. If, in the opinion of AFL Canberra Operations, a club has not complied with the spirit of the By-Laws in relation to the double age structure, the matter will be referred to the Junior Operations Committee. On receiving such a referral, the Committee may determine a penalty for the offending club, including forfeiture of competition points and/or a financial penalty. No penalty shall be applied without the club involved having the opportunity to comment.

7.2 Player Eligibility for Finals

7.2.3 AFL Canberra Junior Division Conditions of Eligibility for Finals

- Any junior player playing in an AFL Canberra junior division (Under 16 Division 1 and below) must play a minimum of 5 home and away matches to be eligible to play in a finals match.
- Two teams in the same age group – If a player plays five (5) or more games in a higher division, he/she must play nine (9) games in the lower division.
- A player on the restricted list shall not be eligible to play in a lower division in the same age group.
- A player who has played in a team in a finals series match shall not be eligible to play in another team or same age group on the same weekend
- Any player who plays five (5) or more games in a higher grade than the under 16's (eg under 18, reserves or seniors) must play nine (9) games down in the Under 16's competition to qualify for the Under 16 AFL Canberra Junior Finals.

Team Forfeits: In the event that a team receives a forfeit just prior to the match commencing, that team may submit their team sheet to ensure that all players appearing upon the said team sheet shall be counted as a game played for the purpose of finals eligibility.



JUNIOR TEAM GRADING CHECKLIST

Team Name:	Grade:		
Questions	Yes	No	Comments
Team Player Numbers (How many)			
Players Missing (How many and who)			
Players Playing Up (How many)			
New Players (How many)			
Players in correct positions			
Representative Players State Players Development Squads School Representative Players (How many)			
Team Skill Level (as judged by Coach) 1 excellent , 5 average	1 2 3 4 5		
Coach's Experience and qualifications (eg: 2 years, Level 1)			
Any players on Restricted List			
Team Make Up Overall Size, Weight and Height of the team			

<p>Top 6 players</p> <p>Either player's name or jumper number</p>		
<p>Overall performance/Comments</p>		
<p>Divisions</p> <p>Please circle</p>	<p>Nominated Division</p> <p>1 2</p>	<p>Recommended Division</p> <p>1 2</p>
<p>AFL Canberra Assessment Team</p>	<p>Signed</p>	<p>Date</p>



RESTRICTED PLAYER LIST

CLUB NAME:

AGE GROUP.....DIVISION 1

NO.	AGE/Date of Birth	REGO NO.	FIRST NAME	SURNAME	REP. STATUS
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
23.					
14.					
15.					
16.					

APPENDIX 1 – AFL CANBERRA JUNIORS PLAYER NUMBERS

Year	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16	Total	% change
2000	188	205	224	140	221	978	
2001	235	162	184	183	154	918	-6.1
2002	186	245	134	139	219	923	+0.5
2003	252	249	235	241	140	1117	+21.0
2004	228	241	229	202	163	1063	-4.8
2005	216	267	230	201	182	1096	+3.1
2006	238	226	258	159	225	1106	+0.9
Average	220	227	213	181	186		