



Raggies Junior Football Program – Coaches Handbook 2023

1. Club Philosophy

The Athelstone 'Raggies' Junior Football Program is a part of the Athelstone Football Club (The Club) which was established in 1904. The Club strives to provide a safe and fun environment for children to play Australian Rules Football with friends, and develop their skills.

2. Junior Coaches

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Club, and no position has a greater impact on our football community than Junior Coaches. Coaches are the face of the Club and have a direct impact on players personal and football development, but also their lifetime enjoyment in playing Australian Rules Football. The joy a Coach gets from helping players develop throughout the season; watching them achieve the smallest things, such as first mark or goal to winning a close game, is a great feeling.

As this role involves children of varying ages and backgrounds, the Club appreciates it can be challenging and the Junior Football Committee is here to support you throughout the season. For the same reasons, Coaches must be professional in their conduct, have appropriate record keeping, standards and be accountable.

As a thank you for your contribution, each season Coaches may elect to receive a 'Raggies' Merchandise voucher to the equivalent value of a 'Raggies' polo shirt.

3. Policy Requirement

All Coaches are required to have a Working with Children's Check registered with the SANFL via [PlayHQ](#), and adhere to all Club policies as well as the [rules and regulations of the SANFL](#).

Additionally all Coaches are required to obtain a Level One Coaches accreditation and 'Play by the Rules' certification.

All Coaches are to provide a signed copy of the SANFL Juniors Coaches Code of Conduct (Annexure A to this handbook) to the Junior Committee Coordinator.

Coaches are required to complete each of these requirements prior to the first training session.



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4. Club Values

- **Respect each other** regardless of gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- **Respect our history**, the club is over 110 years old!
- **Respect the umpires and officials**, they are there to make it possible for you and your child to play the game.
- **Respect the other team**, including their ground and facilities.
- **No swearing tolerated** from players, coaches, officials, or parents on or off the field.
- **Be proud of the Club**, Act as an Ambassador for the Club.
- **Effort = Reward.**

5. Coaching Principles

The Club understands not all players will have the same intensity or passion for football, and as such, the Club's focus is on creating a fun environment in order to develop all players' skills and a positive character rather than an emphasis on winning.

The coaching principles that follow should form the foundation of your coaching style:

- Be Organised
 - A good Coach is highly organised, enthusiastic and establishes a positive culture through their attitude. Training sessions and game-day arrangements are organised well in advance. The Coach dresses in club attire, looks the part and is in control at all times.
- Be Yourself
 - Do not be overly concerned by other coaches or Parents/Guardians. Remember, you are the Coach of the team and you have the ultimate responsibility for the team's conduct.
- Use Assistants
 - Children not only behave better, but also learn more, if they are engaged and active. Use other Parents/Guardians to assist in training and game-day activities to increase the amount of time players have the ball in hand. Ensure assistants understand their roles and responsibility.
- Keep yourself informed and updated on sound coaching principles
 - Ensure you understand the fundamentals of the training program you are implementing and that the program is contemporary and age specific.
- Develop character as well as the skills of the game
 - Demonstrate appropriate behaviour in your conduct both on and off the ground.



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- Good Communication
 - Communicate with your players and their Parent/Guardians regularly and listen to their opinions and suggestions. There will always be the Parent/Guardian who sits in the car, take the time to seek them out as well.

6. List Sizes

The Club accepts having playing lists up to the maximum allowed by SANFL. Larger playing lists assist in case of injuries, unexpected absences, SANFL Development squad commitments, school football commitments, player welfare, and some players choosing other sports as they become older.

If teams have registered numbers greater than the allowable game day number, Coaches are to rotate players evenly throughout the regular season. Coaches are strongly encouraged to maintain a record of this. While the Club does not have a set format for how this should be recorded, feel free to engage with committee members and other coaches to discuss ways this has been done.

In premiership grades for a final series:

- In a three game final series - those players who are available for selection and rostered off in the Semi Final, cannot also be rostered off for a Preliminary Final. For a Grand Final, the Coach will select the best available team ; and
- In a two game final series - those players who are available for selection and rostered off in the Semi Final, cannot also be rostered off in the Grand Final.

Non-selected players during the final series will be allocated game day roles to support the on-field players.

7. Grading

In the event there is sufficient player registrations to allow for two or more teams in any particular age group, the following will occur:

Non-Premiership Grades:

- Coaches from the previous season will band players into three broad groups based on ability and attitude at the completion of that season;
- Players will be split seeking an even spread of ability across all teams; and
- The final decision on each list rests with the Junior Committee Coordinator.

Premiership Grades:

- Coaches from the previous season will band players into three broad groups based on ability and attitude the completion of that season;



- All players will commence and participate in preseason training together allowing adequate opportunity for players to demonstrate their ability and allow coaches and a selection panel the opportunity to make an informed decision;
- If there is sufficient number of registrations for three teams, the second and third teams will have an even spread of ability; and
- The final decision on each list rests with a three-person selection committee nominated by the Junior Football Committee.

Coaches are to remind players and Parents/Guardians that it does not matter which team you play for you are still an important member of the 'Raggies'. Further, playing in different teams provides opportunities to make new friends and gain exposure to different coaching techniques.

8. Training

All Grades

- Players must attend all training sessions and notify the Coach or Team Manager if they cannot attend;
- Misbehaviour at training will not be tolerated and Coaches are to communicate with Parents/Guardians if poor behaviour is impeding effective training sessions.
 - If a Coach is standing a player down from a game for misbehaviour at training, the Coach is to advise the Junior Committee Coordinator via email of the details at the conclusion of training.
- All players must be wearing suitable football attire, and mouthguards are compulsory for all training sessions.

AUSKICK, U7-U9

In line with being 'One Club / One Community', the Club is moving towards a training standard within the Junior Football Program to ensure there is a consistent approach to skills development and terminology used across all teams regardless of our volunteer Coaches background. This will also support Coaches by reducing their time commitment in the requirement for planning training sessions and supporting you on the current best practices for running age specific training sessions

For the 2023 season, the Club will be trialling the [AFL Junior Coaching Curriculum](#). The overarching reason kids play football is to have fun. There is a connection between the level of skills a child has and the amount of enjoyment they experience when playing a sport. As soon the child is not engaged is when we are likely to lose them. Ultimately, kids want to get better at the game so they can get the ball more and experience some success.

This program has been designed by industry experts to sequentially build players skills and confidence using a game-based approach whilst incorporating fundamental skills development. Successful training activities will see:

- A minimum of a football to share between two players;
- Each player has 60 touches of the ball every training session;
- All players are engaged and having fun; and
- There will be no laps, lines or lectures.



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The reasons the Junior Football Committee has selected this program are:

- It is a contemporary training program which covers AUSKICK through to U12;
- Will be regularly reviewed and updated by the AFL therefore reducing the workload of Club volunteers;
- Training sessions are available online with extra resources available through your log in you receive when conducting your compulsory online training course; and
- Parents/Guardians can also review the training session online so it is easier to task parent/guardian assistants at training.

The program consists of 10 training sessions. At the completion of week 10, Coaches can either elect to repeat certain weeks programs to reinforce aspects of the Curriculum; or use the skills they have learnt to design training sessions to focus on specific areas of need they have identified.

U10-U12

Coaches are strongly encouraged to follow level six of the [AFL Junior Coaching Curriculum](#). The program consists of 10 training sessions. At the completion of week 10, Coaches can either elect to repeat certain weeks programs to reinforce aspects of the Curriculum; or use the skills they have learnt to design training sessions to focus on specific areas of need they have identified.

If Coaches elect not to follow the Curriculum, they need to be prepared to produce to the Junior Football Committee a written copy of their proposed training program.

U13-U17.5

The focus remains on creating a fun environment and conducting age appropriate skills development with a focus on game sense and decision-making activities. Coaches are strongly encouraged to collaborate with their peers and research contemporary training methodologies. Coaches at all times should avoid laps, lines and lectures.

Why should we focus on game sense and decision-making training?

- Encourages a holistic approach to the teaching of games – players are taught to solve problems that arise in a game through tactical awareness and understanding; skills are developed in a more meaningful environment.
- Promotes enjoyment for participation – a fun environment increases motivation levels and encourages participation.
- Assists the beginner, who often has limited technical knowledge of a sport. For coaches of beginning players, it is more appropriate to set challenges for players through games rather than conduct technique-based sessions. This lessens the chance of developing players with inflexible techniques who are less able to cope with changes in the playing environment.
- Aids efficient group management – game sense is particularly useful as group management is often easier if the players are having fun and less time is being spent on drills; teaching space, equipment and time can be used more efficiently. It also lets the coach cater for all ability levels by encouraging players to concentrate on the game



aspects, rather than on the textbook execution of the technique, which some may never master.

- Coach talk and intervention is kept to a minimum – the coach questions players to challenge them to find solutions. Rather than providing all the answers, cooperation between the coach and the players is increased due to the player involvement.
- Providing tactical situations that are repetitive within small-sided games assists players to improve their decision-making ability through experience and learning from their good and poor decisions

9. Game Day Behaviours

The Club continues to foster a culture in relation to developing positive character within the players and ensuring they understand the correct way to conduct themselves when playing Australian Rules Football. To assist with this:

- U7-U10: Coaches will read out the bold section of the Club values in the huddle just before the bounce;
- U11-U14: Game day Captain reads/reinforces the bold section of the Club values in the huddle just before the bounce; and
- U15-U17.5: the Coach is to encourage the Game day Captain to promote the Club's values when addressing the group in the huddle.

If a Coach observes a player behaving in a manner contrary to the Clubs values on the field, the player is to be brought to the sidelines for a short time. The player is to be encouraged and given the opportunity to reflect on what has occurred before re-joining the game. Continued conduct contrary to the Clubs values will see the player sit out the remainder of the game.

If a player is required to sit out the remainder of a game due to repeated breaches of the Clubs values the Coach is to email the details of the incident to the Junior Committee Coordinator at the conclusion of the game

Parents/Guardians and other spectators are an important part of fostering a positive attitude within our players and culture within the Club. To ensure they are a part of the game, and there is consistency and transparency in game day messaging, it is important they can also hear the Coaches on game day. To facilitate this:

- U7-U10: Parents/Guardians can attend pre/during/post game addresses by the Coach on the field in line with SANFL guidelines;
- U11-U15: Coaches will conduct all pre/during/post game addresses within vicinity of the boundary line in order for parents/ caregivers to hear the coaches messages; and
- U16-U17.5: Location of Coaches address is at the Coaches' discretion as the players are preparing for the transition to senior football but the Coach will consider appropriate feedback from parents/guardians in relation to the location of these addresses. Feedback is to be submitted through the Team Manager.



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10. Player Rotation Policy

The on-field rotation of players is a policy developed to enhance the participation and skill development of all players. This policy is to ensure that all players feel an essential part of the team, regardless of their age, size, sex, ability or the competition they are playing in. Therefore, it is critical that they have an equal amount of time on the field during the season and ultimately, will keep players in the game and reduce the likelihood of them leaving to pursue other sports. It also satisfies parent/guardian expectations that their child will be given a fair go. Coaches are to avoid overplaying the talented players in key positions, aiming to maximise participation, learning and enjoyment for all players regardless of ability.

It is recommended that all Coaches keep records of weekly game time of each player to ensure that all players have had equal time throughout the season. While the Club does not have a set format for how this should be recorded, feel free to engage with committee members and other coaches to discuss ways this has been done.

Non-Premiership Grades

The rotation of all players through a variety of positions in a game and season is designed to allow players to experience the skills and roles required in different positions, and to ensure all players are provided with equal opportunity. Every player in a team should play at least half a game, and no player should spend more than half a game in any one position. Furthermore, every player should experience playing on each of the five lines of field positions over a three-match period.

NOTE: Players should be rotated through a variety of positions on the field in each line, not straight up and down the "spine" or only on the left or on the right side of the field. Coaches and Team Managers must ensure that this policy is adopted and relates directly to [SANFL Juniors Competition Rules & Regulations](#) (Section 2) – The Spirit of Junior Football.

Premiership Grades

Once children reach these age groups, the emphasis shifts from players rotating through all positions on the ground, to them gaining a level of competency in different positions. Every player in a team should play at least half a game. The difference is these age group players should be left in a position on the field until they have acquire that position's basic strategies and skills. Only then should they move to a new position.

This policy has been adopted from the SANFL Juniors Competition program

11. Red / Blue Cards

If a 'Raggies' player receives a red card, or an affiliated spectator receives a blue card, during a game, the Coach is to email the Junior Football Coordinator of the details at the conclusion of the game.

12. Seeking Fill in Players

If a team requires fill in players from another 'Raggies' team due to insufficient numbers the key principle is about numbers rather than targeting specific players and will follow the following process:



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- Team Managers at the beginning of the season will compile a list of players whose parents/guardians approve them filling in for team, including other age groups;
- Team Managers are to ensure to SJ 15 Playing Up Exemption Form are completed for each parent/guardian approved player;
- All requests are to be conducted Team Manager to Team Manager;
- Players are to be lent on a rotational basis ensuring equal opportunity is given to all approved players;
- Receiving Coaches will give a minimum of half a game to players filling in during the regular season. During finals, playing time will be at the Coaches' discretion.

13. Returning from Injury

Parents/Guardians are ultimately responsible to ensure the player has recovered from injury/illness and is fit to participate in training and games, and obtained relevant medical clearance if appropriate. If a Coach, Team Manager or Trainer has sufficient concern in relation to a player's fitness to participate, they are to raise their concern with the Junior Football Coordinator.

The Junior Football Coordinator will make an assessment based on concerns raised by the team official, as well as feedback from the player and nominated Parent/Guardian. If the Junior Football Coordinator has concerns for the welfare of the player, they are to request a valid medical certificate to be produced clearing the player to participate. The player is not authorised to participate in training or games in these circumstances until a valid medical certificate is provided.

14. Concussion

Player welfare is always the Club's priority and as such, we follow the AFL standards and SANFL policy with respect to concussion management. If any player is suspected to have suffered a concussion there is an automatic one week rest period which can only be waived upon presentation of a valid medical certificate from a Doctor trained in sports medicine (i.e. SportsMed, the Wakefield Sporting Clinic or the Sports and Arthritis Clinic).

15. Coaches Group Meetings

Representatives from the Junior Football Committee will conduct group meetings with Coaches from Premiership and Non-Premiership grades throughout the season namely:

- Prior to week one of training;
- Conclusion of round four;
- Conclusion of round eight;
- The conclusion of the season; and
- Any other timed deemed necessary.

These meeting will provide an opportunity to share information from the SANFL, as well as collaborate on ideas and information between peers.



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Annexure A – SANFL Juniors Coaches Code of Conduct

I..... hereby commit, to the best of my ability, to uphold the SANFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct.

I understand that as an integral component of my accreditation, I must maintain a standard of behaviour and conduct in the best interests of the game and the players/staff in my care. In representing myself in an honest manner, and without bringing the coaching profession or the game into disrepute, I will endeavour to uphold the following to the best of my ability:

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of all individuals within the context of my involvement in Australian Football, by refraining from any discriminatory practices including, but not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, ethnic background, special ability/disability or sexual orientation, preference or identity.
- I will abide by and teach the AFL Laws of the Game and the rules of my Club and League/Association.
- I will be reasonable in the demands I make on the time commitments of the players in my care, having due consideration for their health and wellbeing.
- I will be supportive at all times and I will refrain from any form of personal or physical abuse or unnecessary physical contact with the players in my care.
- I will have due consideration for varying maturity and ability levels of my players when designing practice schedules, practice activities and involvement in competition.
- Where I am responsible for players in the U8-U16.5 year old age groups, I will strive to ensure that all players gain equal playing time. I will avoid overplaying the talented players, aiming to maximise participation, learning and enjoyment for all players regardless of ability.
- I will stress and monitor safety always.
- In recognising the significance of injury and sickness, I will seek and follow the physician’s advice concerning the return of injured or ill players to training.
- I will endeavour to keep informed regarding sound principles of coaching and skill development, and of factors relating to the welfare of my players.
- I will at all times display and teach appropriate sporting behaviour, ensuring that players understand and practice fair play.
- I will display and foster respect for umpires, opponents, coaches, administrators, other officials, parents and spectators.
- I will ensure that players are involved in a positive environment where skill-learning and development are priorities and not overshadowed by a desire to win.
- I reject the use of performance-enhancing substances in sport and will abide by the guidelines set forth in the AFL Anti-Doping and Illicit Drugs policies.

Coaches agree to the following terms:

- † I agree to abide by the SANFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct.
- † I acknowledge that the SANFL, or a body affiliated with the SANFL, may take disciplinary action against me if I breach the Code of Conduct. I understand that the SANFL, or a body affiliated with the SANFL, is required to implement a complaints-handling procedure in accordance with the principles of natural justice, in the event of an allegation against me.
- † **I acknowledge that disciplinary action against me may include de-registration from the SANFL Coaching Accreditation Scheme.**

.....

Signed

Date:

.....

Witness

Date: