

CLUB CIRCULAR – 2024-01

SUBJECT: 2024 Junior Football Rules and Regulation Handbook

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AUDIENCE: Junior Community Clubs
Junior Community Umpiring Organisations

Summary:	Club Action:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Junior Football Competition Policies, Rules and Regulations Handbook has now been finalised and has been published on KIA Club Hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute KIA Club Hub link to all Team Officials including Coaches and Managers. Ensure a physical or e-copy is available for all Match Day Officials. Ensure all volunteers, players and parents are aware of the handbook as well as any new or altered rules, regulations or policies.

WAFC 2024 Junior Football Competition Policies, Rules and Regulations Handbook.

The Junior Club Manual has been finalised for 2024 and uploaded to the new KIA Club Hub website (<https://www.wafootball.com.au/competitions/juniors/kia-club-hub>).

This handbook outlines the Community Football Policies, Rules & Regulations for all Junior and Youth competitions conducted by the West Australian Football Commission (WAFC).

All Competitions across Western Australian that have competitions within the Year 3 to Year 12 range are governed by this handbook. If any League wishes to operate outside the rules, regulations or policies of the handbook, they must apply to their relevant WAFC Competitions Team to seek approval for an exemption. Exemptions granted in previous seasons do not carry over, and Leagues must apply for exemptions annually.

A summary of key changes to the Handbook has been included below.

Re-formatting of the Handbook

The 2024 Junior Club Manual has undergone significant re-formatting to enhance its readability and accessibility.

The content has been strategically divided into distinct sections, each focusing on specific themes or topics. Each section of information has then been assigned a distinct colour, creating a visual

roadmap that aids in easy navigation and comprehension. This deliberate colour scheme serves as a visual guide, allowing participants to quickly identify and locate the required rules, regulations and policies relating to their required topic.

The re-formatting aims to provide volunteers and participants with a more systematic and user-friendly experience, ensuring that the valuable information contained within the Handbook is easily navigable and understood.

We trust that these improvements will contribute to a more effective communication of rules, regulations and policies, ultimately benefiting all participants understanding and engagement with the Handbook. Your feedback on this enhanced format (to be provided at the annual mid-season review) is highly appreciated as we continually strive to optimise the document for your convenience.

Match Day Roles

This section of the Handbook now outlines the various responsibilities assigned to individuals during match days, ensuring clarity and understanding of each role.

Additionally, in previous seasons each match day role had a separate Code of Conduct that only applied to their specific role. In 2024, these documents have been consolidated into one Code of Conduct document that encompasses all roles and participants. By merging into a single document, it will simplify the understanding of expectations and promote consistency, clarity and a shared sense of responsibility for achieving positive game day environments.

Match On-Field Equalisation (Even-up and Even-down)

The Match On-Field Equalisation Policy is in place to ensure both teams have equal numbers on the field during game play. To achieve this requirement, all age groups have traditionally been required to 'Even-Up' when one team is short on players.

Following consultation with our Junior Clubs, a trial of the 'Even Down' rule will be held in the top two age groups across both Male and Female Competitions in 2024. The 'Even Down' rule will see teams with higher numbers bench these excess players, rather than sending them to play for the opposition.

E-Point Bonus Rounds

In 2024, the WAFC will be trialing the introduction of 'Bonus Rounds'. Bonus Rounds will see all E-Points awarded for a match doubled, to further reward teams displaying positive gameday behaviour. Teams who have a scheduled bye during a Bonus Round will be awarded 4 E-Points to ensure they are not disadvantaged by not playing a match.

Two rounds will be pre-selected by the WAFC Competition Team prior to the 2024 season commencing. These rounds will not be made public until the conclusion of the round. One Bonus Round will be held within the first four matches of the season while the second Bonus Round will be held in the final four matches of the season.

Approaching Umpires

This is a new section within the Handbook is specifically dedicated to clarifying communication protocols with umpires on game day. This addition provides explicit guidance on who is authorised to engage in discussions with umpires, ensuring greater transparency and understanding among participants.

This section also includes a new online form that Club Presidents can utilise to provide constructive Umpire Feedback to the WAFC Competitions and Umpiring Teams for training and development purposes.

Stretcher Policy

The Stretcher Policy has been amended to provide greater clarity regarding access to the Playing Surface when a player is injured.

In the case of an injured player, the Umpire will blow their whistle once to stop play and allow the Player to be assessed by the First Aider.

Should a stretcher be required, the First Aider will communicate this to the Umpire who will then blow their whistle twice, indicating that individuals authorized by the First Aider are now permitted to enter the Playing Surface to assist with the carrying off the injured player on the stretcher.

Protective Equipment

Players wanting to wear glasses or goggles during play will no longer need to apply for a Protective Equipment Permit providing the item has plastic lenses, plastic frames and are secured to the head using a band.

Removing the need for Clubs to apply for a permit for a common piece of equipment aligns with the WAFC's commitment to reduce the workload of volunteers.

Concussion

The WAFC has ratified recommendations to change concussion protocols for junior and community football throughout the state.

The new guidelines for dealing with concussion were developed by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) through the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and Sports Medicine Australia.

The ASC Return-To-Sport Protocol for Community and Youth Sport Includes:

- Introduction of light exercise after an initial 24-48 hours of relative rest.
- Several checkpoints to be cleared prior to progression.

- Gradual reintroduction of learning and work activities. As with physical activity, cognitive stimulation, such as using screens, reading and undertaking learning activities, should be gradually introduced after 48 hours.
- At least 14 days symptom-free (at rest) before return to contact/collision training. The temporary exacerbation of mild symptoms with exercise is acceptable as long as the symptoms quickly resolve at the completion of exercise and as long as the exercise-related symptoms have completely resolved before the resumption of contact training.
- A minimum period of 21 days until the resumption of competitive contact/collision sport.
- Consideration of all symptom domains (physical, cognitive, emotional, fatigue, sleep) throughout the recovery process.
- Return to learning and work activities should take priority over return to sport.
- That is, while graduated return to learn/work activities and sports activities can occur simultaneously, the athlete should not return to full contact sports activities until they have successfully completed a full return to learn/work activities.

the WAFC's priority is the health and safety of the players, as is the commitment to the ongoing enhancement of player safety measures.

Grading and Penalty Ranges

In an effort to increase transparency relating to penalties for social media policy breaches and verbal abuse offences, two comprehensive matrixes have been incorporated to offer clear guidance on penalty ranges.

The matrixes serve as a structured framework, providing a visual representation of penalty ranges so Clubs can readily provide information to their members of the consequences associated with specific violations. The matrixes also foster a greater sense of accountability and fairness across all competitions as they facilitate consistency in the decision-making process that ensures penalties are proportionate to the severity of the offence.

Year 3 Competitions and Year 3/4 Female Competitions

Following consultation with Junior Clubs, the WAFC will be trialing 12-a-side in the Year 3 Competitions and Year 3/4 Female Competitions in the 2024 season. The reduction of players will further enhance each player's experience through improved involvement in scoring chains, scores, and overall touches of the football, fast-tracking the players development and competence. Should the trial be successful in 2024, 12-a-side will be introduced to Year 4 Competitions in season 2025.

Additionally, Coaches will no longer be permitted on the playing surface during game play. Teams will now be permitted to have a Runner which will allow the Coach to pass on constructive coaching messages to players on the field. Removing the coach from field allows players to simply play the game with less on-field direction, improving decision making and problem solving. It also ensures less involvement with umpires and their decisions, especially first year umpires who are building their confidence.

Year 3 to 6 Modified aged Competitions

The number of Officials permitted in the Coaches Box has been reduced to four – Coach, Team Manager, First Aider and Runner. Reducing the number of volunteers needed to deliver a game reduces the volunteer burden for clubs.

A minor reduction to the break times will streamline the overall modified gametime which will improve green space capacity and lessen the time commitment required to participate at this age. Breaks have been reduced from 5-10-5 to 3 minute quarter time, 8 minute half time and 3 minute three quarter time.

In previous seasons, any player involved in a reportable offence occurring in a Modified age Competition was managed by the player's club. In 2024, the penalty will no longer be determined by the player's club and will instead be determined by the WAFC Competitions Team. Any penalty will align with the standard range of penalties and grading matrixes applied to Youth aged competitions. Whilst the penalties will be the same, Modified aged players will not be required to appear before the WAFC Community Football Tribunal due to their young age. Any disputes regarding penalties awarded will utilise the appeal process rather than the Tribunal.

All Junior aged Competitions (Year 3 to 12)

The minimum required game-time per match has been increased from 50% to 60%. This increase assists teams in achieving a more even gametime allocation for all their players. Currently Teams achieve a band of gametime between 50-100% and this modification aims to see the band reduce to 60-90%.

The Interchange Steward role can now be combined with an assistant coach role if desired. This reduces duplication as many assistant coaches are monitoring player game time and can effectively fill both roles.

First Aider requirements

Following feedback from Clubs, the qualifications required for a First Aider have been revised to simplify the criteria, making it easier for individuals to understand and fulfill the necessary requirements. By reducing unnecessary complexities, we also aim to encourage more people to undergo training and become certified First Aiders, thus bolstering the pool of volunteers Clubs can draw from.

Please visit the Kia Club Hub section on the WA Football website to view and download the full 2024 Junior Football Competition Policies, Rules and Regulations Handbook.